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General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 23 September 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Baudin (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 118 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/53/345/Add.3)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): In a letter contained in document A/53/345/Add.3, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/53/345 and its addenda 1 and 2, Burundi and the Republic of Moldova have made the necessary payment to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Address by Mr. Hassan Gouled Aptidon, President of the Republic of Djibouti

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Djibouti.

Mr. Hassan Gouled Aptidon, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Gouled Aptidon, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aptidon (*interpretation from French*): I bring to you, Sir, and to all the representatives to this General Assembly the warm greetings of the people of Djibouti. I extend to Mr. Opertti my sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. As the world grows smaller and the problems confronting us grow ever more challenging, the deliberations of humanity's forum, the General Assembly, assume a critical urgency. His competence and broad experience will undoubtedly guide us very ably in the coming year.

We are also most grateful to his predecessor, the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, for bringing to bear a degree of focus and productivity that was exemplary. Through his exceptional grasp of the issues before the General Assembly, he was able to lead us to satisfactory results.

Our indefatigable Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, continues to earn our deepest appreciation for the manner in which he has managed the activities of the

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Organization, especially for the way in which the United Nations has risen in the eyes of the general public.

Demands on the United Nations have increased. Ever-changing economic, environmental, social and political problems have added to these demands. Core contributions to the funds and programmes continue to decline, however, and the United Nations faces unpredictable resource flows due to unpaid assessments. Recognizing that a radical transformation of the United Nations would cause political tensions, the Secretary-General wisely formulated a series of realistic reforms to rationalize operations, reduce costs and refocus on certain critical areas demanding United Nations attention, such as the mitigation of poverty, sustainable development and strengthening management and coordination, both at Headquarters and in field-level activities.

We support the Secretary-General's relentless efforts to communicate directly with and engage the people of the world, exploring critical issues and exchanging views with them, and explaining the role, capacities and constraints of the United Nations system. His work has given the United Nations a reality and a new face vital to its mission.

In early August, a corner of our world, eastern Africa, was profoundly shocked, baffled and aggrieved by the well-coordinated simultaneous bombings of United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Over 260 people lost their lives and thousands of innocent people were injured in those attacks.

These brazen acts of aggression wrought unprecedented carnage and extensive destruction and damage to property. I recently visited Nairobi. What I saw resembled a war zone. I unreservedly condemn this senseless act of terrorism. Once again, I wish to express our heartfelt condolences to all the families who lost their loved ones in this tragedy and pray for the speedy recovery of the injured.

May I also express our concern at the United States action against the Sudan. There are growing doubts about the justification for the raid that devastated the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant, which produced desperately needed medicines and drugs. Visiting there recently, I was struck by the extent of the damage. All that is left of the plant is a mountain of rubble. The onus lies now on the United States to produce fuller evidence to support its claim. We also urge the United Nations to undertake an independent investigation to determine whether this factory was indeed making chemical weapons, as alleged.

It seems essential to remind ourselves that the annual session of the General Assembly has become the sole occasion for virtually all mankind, collectively, to appraise the human condition. Additionally, drawn as we are by the hypnotic spell of the approaching millennium, the need to assess our past successes, achievements and failures and to develop priorities and strategies for the future has assumed a sense of urgency.

A little over 50 years ago, the world embarked with great vision, enthusiasm and optimism upon a high-minded journey to end the scourge of war, eliminate poverty and create a world of freedom and justice for all. Undoubtedly, much has been accomplished and the world is a far better place to live in, despite the fact that many dreams remain unfulfilled and many commitments unimplemented.

This decade, in particular, has witnessed tendencies towards the fragmentation of societies, the spread of civil strife and conflict and a plunge further into the poverty trap. In general, we recognize that respect for human rights has improved and that many countries have embraced democracy and good governance, and we welcome that.

Unfortunately, human rights violations continue, and there is a lingering concern about the capacity, resources and mandates of the United Nations for timely intervention in cases of egregious violations of human rights. We have had the bad experience of regrettable vacillation and indifference in the face of appalling crimes committed in Bosnia and Rwanda, and now in Kosovo. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has correctly stated, efforts to prevent the most abominable violence should focus not only on resolving ethnic and political disputes, but also on the social issues of chronic underdevelopment, grinding poverty, mass unemployment, widespread illiteracy and systematic inequalities of income or opportunities.

We therefore welcome the establishment of the International Criminal Court, which replaces once and for all the ad hoc proceedings. It fills in the gap in international law exposed by the famous Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals: the need to install a permanent international institution able to investigate war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

Much of the technological advancement of the twentieth century has created a host of other problems. Man's mastery over nature for his own benefit has

become a potential nightmare of environmental disasters, one which we seemingly lack the will to contain or correct. Will we continue to have land to farm, clean water to drink and healthy air to breath? Will our cities decay into piles of humans for whom day to day survival becomes the crowning achievement of their lives?

Overpopulation, abject poverty, crime, drugs and the consequences they bring may soon threaten the foundations of social cohesion. To a great extent, these forces are transnational, extending beyond the capacity and control of individual States. They are global in nature and pose serious challenges to society and its leadership. We must act collectively in marshalling the resources necessary to mitigate the harmful effects of modernization and globalization.

Unquestionably, the founding of the United Nations was one of the outstanding achievements of this century. After 50 years, we can take pride in the continuing relevance of this institution. Naturally, given the breadth and complexity of issues facing the United Nations and mankind, there will always be differences of views on the evolving role of the United Nations. However, the basic mission of the United Nations has not changed one iota: collective international action for maintenance of international peace and security and promotion of economic and social development for all.

While the Charter remains relevant, the world of 1945 is no longer with us. The United Nations of today must embrace the realities of the new millennium. Anachronistic structures and outmoded thinking cannot coexist with current needs and perceptions. The phenomenal growth in the membership of the United Nations leads us to hope for a more democratic, transparent and representative Organization. This is the case in particular with regard to the Security Council, which must reconcile itself to undergoing a thorough transformation in both its structure and its functions in order to reflect a more equitable geographical representation of developing and developed countries.

The sudden outbreak of hostilities between our neighbours, Ethiopia and Eritrea, has greatly dismayed us. As in the case of Somalia, Djibouti has attempted to reconcile the different points of view in various ways, although there are few real signs of hope for a way out of the stalemate. Beyond the tragic loss of lives, displacement of people and destruction of property and facilities, the psychological wounds inflicted by the tensions and hostilities that are dividing these countries suggest that it will be several difficult years before the Horn of Africa becomes once again a region of peace and trust. Both leaders understand my frustration — indeed, my exasperation — at this wasteful, unnecessary and seemingly endless conflict. We are confronted by serious regional problems and must revive economies that have been dormant for a long time. We need a new vision, new perspectives and a far-sighted approach to deal with bilateral differences.

I urge my friends, the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea, to give peace a chance. Let us end the hostile propaganda and provocative rhetoric and replace it with a genuine desire to engage constructively in finding a solution to this problem. It would be a tragedy if the relentless shuttling between Addis Ababa and Asmara by leaders and senior officials of many Governments, including heads of regional organizations, who have all demonstrated immense goodwill and perseverance and expended time, energy and boundless effort in trying to resolve the conflict, were to be taken by some to be largely symbolic. We believe they are more than that. The series of attempts made by a great many mediators and facilitators demonstrates the seriousness of this matter. The many views, opinions, decisions and resolutions relating to this conflict, even if not wholly acceptable to one or both parties, nevertheless contain significant elements that can form the basis of a settlement. It is incumbent upon both leaders to go beyond the immediate unfortunate problem and to look forward resolutely to a better and promising future of benefit to all. In the words of the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, I call upon the leaders of those countries

> "to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours".

There is no doubt that the speed of globalization and the expansion and integration of the international economy have brought immense benefits to many countries and positive changes in the living condition of many people. However, several countries and their populations, particularly in the developing world, are facing marginalization and hopelessness because they are unable to adapt to the rapid pace of integration. The least developed countries in particular require special attention so that they do not slip further into the abyss of poverty and disintegration.

The *World Economic Survey 1997* shows that Africa will have to demonstrate still higher and more sustained

rates of growth in order to alleviate widespread poverty and reduce high unemployment. Improved and sustained macroeconomic stability and economic reforms have played important roles in Africa's recent economic upturn, although the sacrifices have been great.

But Africa must now grapple with the erroneous perception by developed countries that private investment flows can be a substitute for development assistance, which in fact largely bypasses the continent: only 5 per cent of such assistance goes to Africa as a whole, and only 1 per cent to sub-Saharan Africa. Add this to the crippling debt servicing costs and it becomes clear that Africa, and in particular the least developed of its countries, is in a precarious financial position. The danger of prolonged, or indefinite, marginalization is a real one.

As the continent continues to be mired in a series of crises, the much vaunted policy of finding African solutions to African problems, which was among the precursors of Western disengagement, seems to be predicated on a number of premises that are tenuous at best. The fact is that Africa cannot succeed alone; it needs serious, resolute commitment to Africa's economic recovery on the part of the industrial countries, along with a determination to prevent and resolve conflicts. It is important to note that African countries have played an important role in the efforts to maintain and restore peace in Liberia and in Sierra Leone. That is a positive development that we cannot fail to welcome. But we are saddened by the resurgence of hostilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We warn all involved in the current crisis that pursuing individual military agendas in the Congo is not in the interest of the long-term stability of the region or of Africa as a whole. The territorial integrity of that country must be respected, and no country in the region or in any other region of Africa should try to place any of its neighbours under its thumb.

Since 1991, at the time of Somalia's implosion, Djibouti, both independently and through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), has tirelessly sought to restore peace and security to that country. In 1991, we organized the first two national reconciliation conferences; then the United Nations began its extensive operations. Subsequently, Ethiopia, with a mandate from IGAD and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), organized a series of meetings that led to the Sodere agreement. Other countries, the League of Arab States, various Arab States and other organizations have also made serious reconciliation efforts during this period. Every year, new conferences were held and new agreements signed, none of which were implemented. This shows that the faction leaders had learned the technique of making people believe in a reconciliation that would last about as long as their return flights home.

Since the United Nations departure and disengagement from Somalia in the mid-1990s, the international community has come to remember only a "failed operation" and a "failed State". But that devastated country needs the United Nations to become engaged once again. Somalia deserves greater interest and attention than it now gets. This is not solely a regional or even an African or Arab problem; Somalia was and continues to be an international disaster. Its neighbours have made enough concessions, and they stand to sacrifice and risk even more. It is therefore fair to say that it is not easy or tolerable to continue living in a no-peace-no-war situation. Imagine having to life beside a neighbour without laws, without a government, without a central authority.

After seven years of bickering, the faction leaders have nothing new to offer. Give the people of Somalia, with the support of the international community, a chance to elect leaders of their choice, by stages, both regionally and nationally — without threats and without blackmail. It is not impossible that the evolving new approach of setting up regional administrations or "mini-states" could enhance security and stability and shape the future political structure of Somalia, so long as they do not compromise the country's unity.

We are deeply saddened by the lack of progress under the peace agreements in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel is continuing to seize Palestinian property; engaging in relentless settlement activities in the West Bank; imposing intransigent rule over East Jerusalem; and illegally and unilaterally extending the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem.

Israel's arbitrary and coercive measures, which include the suspension of the Palestinians' rights to enter, work, trade, reside, remain, build or travel in the country, have created intolerable uncertainties and a difficult situation. We demand that Israel immediately withdraw its troops, put a stop to settlement and construction in the settlements, and desist from taking unilateral decisions that undermine the peace efforts, as called for by the Oslo peace accords.

We are one with the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State and

to live side by side with Israel in peace and within secure borders. Above all, we hope that Israel will heed the call by the international community to establish comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

The relentless fratricidal war in Afghanistan shows no sign of abating, despite intense and continuing international efforts. The people of Afghanistan have suffered immensely and are on the verge of losing all hope of any political solution to this crisis. In the last two years there has been an increase in violence, intolerance, and the abuse of human rights, in particular against women. We hope that the risk of tensions escalating as a result of the murder of Iranian diplomats will be defused through the ongoing initiatives of the Secretary-General.

The international community has often turned to sanctions in order to combat violations of international law or to punish uncontrolled criminal behaviour. In practice, however, the application of sanctions is often too general and broad, serving particular political interests. Real targets or target groups are not affected, and it is the innocent population at large that suffers as a result of such blind embargoes. Once sanctions become personalized or are used to serve as weapons to serve and protect powerful interests, they cease to have time limits or clear indications as to when their requirements have been met. Their original purpose is lost and the sanctions assume a life of their own. The end result is a climate of frustration and non-compliance with a resultant considerable squandering of credibility. Without a sense of limits, purpose and fairness, the exercise then becomes futile and counter-productive.

Behind the broad global problems facing our planet Earth, some of which I have mentioned briefly, lie specific areas and countries which merit particular attention. For example, there is universal concern about the economic and financial crisis assailing Asia and its implications for the rest of the world. It is difficult to comprehend that the Asian miracle we had all come to marvel at should collapse so abruptly, with grave consequences for Governments, businessmen and peoples. Many of the countries involved risk falling into severe recession. Whatever the explanation for this crisis, this experience proves that there are real perils in the free flow of international capital. The danger is incalculable, forcing serious revision of some of our long-term development plans.

It is also disturbing to see so many of the resources of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) going towards rescuing large international banks and financial institutions that recklessly and of their own volition placed their funds in sectors where restraint and control were needed. Now we must all wonder who will be the next to suffer a flight of capital and who will help to bail them out. There is undoubtedly a strong case for creating a better mechanism to regulate international standards for financial management and capital flows.

The task of engendering a national sense of identity and cohesion and shared values against a backdrop of turbulence and instability is one of the core challenges of nation-building. In Djibouti, we have had our ups and downs. We continue to face daunting economic difficulties, aggravated by the presence of a great number of refugees, which has overwhelmed our limited means and severely strained our social services.

I am proud to say that Djibouti, despite these obstacles, has established itself as a nation, a responsible member of the international community. Since gaining independence over 20 years ago, we have effected a series of changes aimed at the attainment of better standards of living and have undertaken to found a culture of democracy and tolerance. The process of accelerated political and economic change continues, however fragile it may be.

I believe in the concept that there should be opponents but not enemies. That is why tolerance, compassion and forbearance have guided my actions as leader of my country. We have pursued a policy of regional and ethnic inclusion, and have long recognized the concept of diversity in unity.

Djibouti's approach to regional affairs has always been based on mutual respect, moderation and cooperation. We believe that the countries of the Horn of Africa must unite to confront the problems of poverty, conflicts and underdevelopment within the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development whose revitalization is crucial.

At the international level, we credibly contributed to the maintenance of peace and security during our membership in the Security Council in 1993 and 1994. As an extension of this, we have participated in international peacekeeping missions to bring peace and stability to countries in the throes of conflict.

In the context of the current global financial turmoil, one thing is certain: yesterday's international institutions

cannot cope with today's intensity, magnitude and rapidity, which demand greater openness and transparency. Djibouti therefore joins in the overwhelming call for a comprehensive overhaul of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank so that they can adequately respond to the financial calamity we are experiencing. They must also be fully equipped to mount a determined attack on poverty, growing hopelessness and underdevelopment. I pray that the new millennium will bring us more stability, understanding and harmony among nations, and among peoples within nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Djibouti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Gouled Aptidon, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré, President of the Republic of the Niger

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of the Niger, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maïnassara Baré (*interpretation from French*): His illustrious election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session gives me the pleasant opportunity to express to Mr. Opertti, on behalf of the people and Government of the Niger, our warmest congratulations. His unanimous election is assuredly a legitimate confirmation both of his personal merits and of the firm commitment of his country, Uruguay, to the triumph of our Organization's noble ideals.

These congratulations I extend to the other members of the Bureau who help the President in his task, in the achievement of whose success I can guarantee the full cooperation of the delegation of Niger.

I would also like to express my sincere compliments to the President's predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his invaluable work as President.

To Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of our Organization, I am happy to repeat here the full support of the Government of Niger for his remarkable activities in the service of world peace and the courageous reform work he is doing in order to allow the United Nations to better respond to the challenges of the coming new millennium. I cannot fail to pay tribute to his outstanding success in finding, through determination and courage, a diplomatic way out of the Iraq crisis at the beginning of this year, thus greatly contributing to the safeguarding of peace and security in the region and thus to enhancing the credibility and the prestige of our Organization, as well as to the strengthening of his personal commitment and his authority.

For more than a half century the United Nations has carried out one of its main missions by saving us from a third world conflict, which certainly would have been fatal to humankind. The end of the cold war brought hope of the emergence of a new international order based on total respect for the principles laid down in the United Nations Charter and international law, even if that hope needs further strengthening, in particular because of the persistence of violent and murderous conflicts, the increase of tensions of all kinds and the accumulation of increasingly destructive weapons by a growing number of nations.

Africa remains the region of the globe most affected by conflicts — repeated, disturbing conflicts, genuine sources of instability, of intolerable suffering and of apocalyptic movements of populations and impoverishment. That is why the Government of Niger welcomed the Security Council initiative to invite the Secretary-General to submit a report to it on the causes of conflict in Africa and their possible remedies. I would like once again to congratulate the Secretary-General on the important report (S/1998/318) he submitted, a report remarkable for its frankness and its realistic recommendations for assuring durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. It is our earnest hope that this report will contribute to awakening the human conscience and bringing the international community to a point where it will further help the efforts of the

African countries in their unremitting search for peace and prosperity.

Within the framework of the efforts made in Africa to redress the situation, the people and Government of Niger welcome the success this year in defusing numerous conflicts, particularly those in the Central African Republic and Sierra Leone. By personally participating in the festivities which marked the return to power of Mr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, the democratically elected President of Sierra Leone, I was able to show my Government and people's deep commitment to democratic processes and the establishment of the rule of law in Africa.

This is a good opportunity to pay tribute to the decisive, beneficial role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the restoration of constitutional legality and the return of calm to Sierra Leone, thereby implementing the political will and determination of the ECOWAS heads of State. The exemplary intervention of ECOWAS to resolve conflicts in the West Africa subregion testifies to the opportuneness of giving more responsibility to subregional and regional organizations in the prevention and management of conflicts. Their unparalleled local knowledge could, when necessary, be given the logistic support and expertise of the United Nations to deal with local conflicts, in keeping with the prescriptions of the Agenda for Peace of the Secretary-General and with the provisions of the Charter.

Despite major progress achieved in this respect, the hostilities which are troubling several subregions show that the goal of peace is far from being achieved on the continent.

Somalia remains deep in torment, despite laudable efforts by neighbouring countries and the international community to promote national reconciliation and the restoration of a normal political and social life.

Confrontations and strife are continuing in the Great Lakes region, where instability and insecurity, as well as the poverty which accompanies massive movements of populations, daily trouble our consciences.

Faced with the unremitting recurrence of differences and disputes which degenerate here and there into armed conflicts, we urge the countries concerned to show restraint and to accede, with the help of the international community, to offers of mediation to resolve their differences, in keeping with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to which they have freely subscribed.

Certain claims relating to identity, as well as the exacerbation of social, cultural or political characteristics, often generate violent upheavals, which may rapidly take the form of terrorism, at times blind and bloody. Faced with these phenomena, the international community must unite in efforts to pursue and deepen its thinking and the collective action initiated a few years ago at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit in Egypt, in order to deal appropriately with these problems.

In this regard, Niger would like, through me, from this lofty rostrum, to reaffirm once again its firm condemnation of terrorism and any use of violence in relations between nations, peoples and States. Just as we explicitly and firmly condemned the cowardly attacks carried out last August against American diplomatic representatives in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and in Nairobi, Kenya, so do we disapprove of the unilateral resort to military force against sovereign States.

In this regard, the Government of Niger deplores the attack against the Al Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, an attack which took the lives of many innocent people and undermined the provision of pharmaceutical products in several countries of the region. Therefore, it seems necessary to us to consider quickly sending to Khartoum an international mission of inquiry, as requested by the Sudanese authorities. We in Niger believe the request to be sincere, having had the privilege of visiting on 6 May the sites and the pharmaceutical factory in question.

The Middle East peace process has been at a stalemate for more than a year now despite the invaluable efforts of its sponsors to revive it. Therefore it is necessary to deploy every effort to bring the Government of Prime Minister Netanyahu to a point where it will respect the commitments Israel has solemnly made.

The Government and people of Niger would like to reiterate their unswerving support for the cause of the Palestinian people and to reaffirm once again their conviction that no peace in the Middle East can be just and lasting until the Palestinian people regain their inalienable rights, including their right to establish an independent state on their national territory.

Of course, peace in the region also means the withdrawal by Israel from the Syrian Golan and from

southern Lebanon. That is why my Government welcomes the recent General Assembly resolution giving more prerogatives to the Palestinian representation within the Assembly. It is our wish that this significant progress lead to the recognition of Palestine as a fully fledged member of the community of States.

Turning to the question of Jammu and Kashmir, Niger, which supports the just struggle of the people of Kashmir to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, deeply wishes that the international community continue to give full attention to this issue.

The arms race and the escalation that we have seen in that area recently strengthens our conviction that we should urgently convene a new and fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. Additional progress appears indispensable in the area of the control of weapons of mass destruction and the establishment of more effective standards concerning conventional weapons.

The success achieved in banning anti-personnel mines should encourage us to go farther in order to bring about a better regulation of small arms and small-calibre weapons. In this case my country welcomes the measures taken to strengthen the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Lomé.

For several decades our Organization has been seeking to adopt a coherent approach to effectively meet the major challenges of poverty and development, in particular by working to establish a strengthened world partnership to finance development. It is time, therefore, to reverse the trend of reduced official development assistance and to join our efforts together to increase the scope of that assistance by revising its modalities. In this respect my country expects a great deal from the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, set for October 1998. We expect that Conference to explore new strategies for mobilizing official development assistance and to reaffirm the international community's commitment to make the development of Africa one of its priorities.

It is indispensable, moreover, resolutely to implement bold policies to relieve and even to forgive the external debt of the poorer countries as part of a general agreement to resolve this problem, whose solution is overdue. That external debt represents an insuperable hindrance to any effort to bring about economic growth and human development in a large number of developing countries, and in particular in the most deprived among them.

The marginalization of the African continent is continuing, which, in this era of globalization, calls for the establishment of an international mechanism that is capable of ensuring a more extensive integration of the developing countries into the world economy.

As is well known, my country, Niger, is facing various factors that limit its efforts at development: increasingly harsh climatic conditions; food shortages; strong demographic pressure; being landlocked; a drop in the price of its main export product, uranium; too heavy an external debt; and low investment. All of these things have contributed to making us for some time now a country at the bottom of the ladder in terms of the human development index.

But we have never given up, and my Government has drafted a national programme framework to combat poverty, proposing as a participatory measure a package of strategies in the medium term intended to control this scourge and to stimulate economic growth. This programme, moreover, is an essential component of our Economic Recovery Programme, which was adopted by our National Assembly in July 1997 and which last March in Geneva was the subject of a particularly successful round table.

I take this opportunity, since these organizations are part of the United Nations system, to say here how deeply we thank not only the Bretton Woods institutions — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — but also the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund. These agencies, which often have been among the first to perceive the key role that the right political and social environment plays in creative reform at the national level, have given us the benefit of their expertise and their advice and thus contributed to the success of that round table. We are certain that the promises of contributions they made at that meeting will very rapidly materialize.

At this stage I wish to reaffirm solemnly here in the Assembly and before the entire international community that the democratic process is making headway in Niger and will remain irreversible under my guidance. The vitality of our democracy is reflected in, *inter alia*, a multi-party system, with an unhindered opposition, that is tirelessly attempting to establish a culture of dialogue and peace on a permanent basis. But our democracy is also reflected in the existence of a totally free private

press, a civil society that plays a front-ranking role and an independent judicial system that is determined to protect the rights and freedoms that the Constitution guarantees to citizens.

As part of strengthening the democratic process and consolidating peace, particular attention is being given to strengthen intermediate bodies, which are important partners of civil society — the non-governmental organizations, associations and labour unions — so as to allow them effectively to contribute to the process of creating a more dynamic and conscious political life. My Government is resolutely committed to consolidating these democratic achievements, as evidenced by the holding on 22 November of this year of local elections that will establish a policy of decentralization which we have chosen to promote the participation of the people in development and also to bring about good governance in Niger.

Similarly, on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I wish to reaffirm solemnly that my Government will work tirelessly to do everything in its power to bring about respect for, and to respect, human rights, based on its conviction that this respect is a precondition for the progress of human society.

In conclusion, I should like to express the full confidence that we have in the United Nations. In our view, this irreplaceable institution remains the only forum that can ensure the advent of a new world order based on justice, fairness, liberty and peace.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Niger for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Alemán Lacayo (Nicaragua) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I would like, before beginning my statement, to express my solidarity with the peoples of the Caribbean nations who during the past few days have been victims of hurricane Georges.

As well as warmly greeting all representatives, I would like to express my very cordial congratulations to Mr. Opertti on his election as President of the General Assembly for its fifty-third session. This eminent position not only represents well-deserved recognition of his capability and experience, but is also a significant distinction for Latin America.

Allow me also to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his vision and efforts to promote deep reforms of the United Nations system. Nicaragua gives its total support to these important initiatives, which are aimed at strengthening and promoting the Organization's role in international cooperation for sustainable development.

With regard to the Security Council, there are grounds for concern over the postponements and absence of concrete proposals from the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. My country shares the opinion that resolutions involving amendments to the Charter must be approved by two thirds of the members of the General Assembly.

The globalization of all spheres of life and liberalization of the economy constitute a new challenge. In this connection, we share the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in his annual report, about the need to reorient actions and efforts with a new vision that will help countries carry out a satisfactory transition to the globalized economy, which involves complex and sensitive processes.

At the end of the twentieth century, the world is facing profound changes that require innovative solutions in order for humanity to move in such a direction that science and technology can have a positive effect on the

development of countries. The historic transformation we are living through has frequently increased the inequalities between countries; we must therefore plan how to reduce these negative effects.

In commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we reaffirm our commitment to continue to work with all the means at our disposal to promote and protect human rights. In Nicaragua we are moving ahead with the consolidation of peace and democracy based on full respect for human rights, establishment of the rule of law, respect for the separation of powers and the guarantee of individual liberties. At the same time, we have taken important steps in order to reach higher levels of economic development with social equity.

My Government is convinced that in order to reap fruits we must plant seeds, human capital being one of the best investments for integrated and sustainable development. We have therefore made it a priority to raise levels of education and extend its reach to all sectors. Likewise, we are redirecting our efforts and resources to maintain and improve social programmes for the protection of individuals and families in great poverty. This, together with dealing with unemployment, is our priority.

The Government's social policies require healthy and effective economic policies that ensure continuity along with the necessary impetus for development. In this connection, the Government's general objective is to make it possible for the private sector to create products and jobs within a climate of stability, promoted by establishing clear, reliable and transparent rules that apply equally to everyone, as well as through dialogue and agreement, which are the cornerstones of governability and harmony. In this context, strengthening the integrated system for procuring and administering justice is essential. This includes the sensitive area of security for individuals and their property.

The macroeconomic transformations that we have undertaken include significant reforms in the taxation and financial system, as well as important measures to protect the environment, creating an awareness of the need to utilize rationally our natural wealth. These initiatives have been supported by the international community, and in this connection it is appropriate to recognize the assistance received from the United Nations Development Programme for many endeavours — especially its support, in coordination with civil society and non-governmental organizations, for the National Commission for Sustainable Development.

Nicaragua hopes that at the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Buenos Aires in November this year, there will be recognition of the environmental protection work done by the developing countries in designating important expanses of their territories as protected areas. Likewise, we hope that mechanisms for clean development to facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gases will be adopted.

At the end of this millennium the battle against the production, trafficking in and use of drugs continues to be one of the greatest challenges to humanity. My country expresses its satisfaction at the results achieved during the special session of the General Assembly devoted to this important subject. Similarly, we are participating actively in the negotiation and signing of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, approved on 13 November 1997 by the Organization of American States.

We consider international terrorism and other forms of organized crime to be terrible scourges of our societies. We condemn all terrorist acts and reassert our conviction that they require firm and severe responses. We are in solidarity with the victims of these actions and support every initiative to increase international cooperation in confronting these inhuman, cruel and unlawful activities that affect the security of our States.

We repeat that the role of my Government is that of facilitator and promoter. We are firm believers in the free market economy, with a humanistic sensibility and social justice. We believe with the same pragmatic conviction in globalization and in the broadest and most active international relations, without exception.

Globalization is not a panacea per se, although it is an exceptional opportunity if prudent and realistic measures are envisaged and taken. These must also be imaginative and audacious, without neglecting the palliatives that mitigate and cushion the rigours of the first phases of adjustment and opening up.

There is no doubt that globalization will promote unity at the international level. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the whirlwind forces that could cause irreparable internal ruptures should the less-favoured majority sectors — which are precisely those that demand our priority attention to their urgent vital needs — be

sacrificed to gain time and avoid difficulties. Moreover, the vulnerability to which smaller economies are exposed in the face of crisis — such as that of the financial markets currently casting a shadow over the world economy — cannot be avoided.

The President took the Chair.

In the first 18 months of my Administration, we have had the highest rate of economic growth in Central America: 5 per cent in 1997 and an estimated rate of slightly over 6 per cent for the current year. Within these indicators, the increase in the agricultural sector is 60 per cent. At the same time, we have created 170,000 new productive jobs, with a goal of 500,000 contemplated for the five-year term of 1997-2001 for which I was elected President. In 1997, we brought inflation down to an annual level of 7 per cent.

Our economic policy has received the backing of the international community, represented by over 40 countries and multilateral organizations. After Nicaragua reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, in Geneva, Switzerland, in April of this year, on a new programme for an enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF), these supporters won us $1.8 billion over the next three years. Furthermore, upon the completion of the ESAF programme, we would be forgiven up to 80 per cent of the large external debt inherited from the past, within the concessionary programme of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. These signs appear to indicate that, given the steps we are taking and the enormous sacrifices we are making, the time-frame for our becoming creditors to these facilities could be shortened.

We have turned to the international community, calling on it from its highest forum to continue to support us in our daily and difficult battle to get ahead, leaving behind a dark past of destruction and violence which we have been slowly overcoming with the combined efforts of all, guided by a sincere spirit of reconciliation based on forgiveness and forgetting. The exhausting legacy of that past is the burden of a gigantic foreign debt of approximately $12.5 billion and a devastated economy, which, within the space of a few years, was set back dramatically by more than 50 years. We seek understanding and help to achieve forgiveness of our stifling external debt as soon as possible.

We must bear in mind that the United Nations, as a supranational body that coordinates and harmonizes the world's efforts in many areas, is the most important and pluralistic forum in which the opinions of all States are freely expressed and the most important decisions taken within the framework of world politics. Nevertheless, we note once again, with great sadness, the absence of the sister Republic of China, which, as we all know, was a founding Member of the United Nations in 1945.

The international community is aware that the Republic of China respects the principles that govern the United Nations Charter, particularly its mission of peace and broad and generous international cooperation. The denial of the right of a people to be recognized and accorded full and effective participation misrepresents and contradicts the noble spirit of the universal mission of this Organization and constitutes a painful collective violation of the human rights of more than 21 million people.

We therefore call once again on the nations of the world to reconsider resolution 2758 (XXVI), which so unjustly excludes the Republic of China, with a view to restoring its right to participate in all the activities of the United Nations.

We are certain, Sir, that under your enlightened guidance, we will achieve concrete results on the delicate points on our agenda that will undoubtedly help our peoples and Governments in a very positive and tangible way to achieve the widest and most satisfactory shared benefits.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: May I remind representatives that, in accordance with the General Assembly's decision taken at its 3rd meeting, the list of speakers will be closed today at 6 p.m.

Address by Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sharif (Pakistan): Mr. President,I wish to congratulate you on your well-deserved election to preside over this session of the General Assembly. It is taking place at a time of profound change and disturbing economic and political developments in various parts of the world. Your responsibilities are correspondingly imposing. I am confident that your accomplishments will be similarly significant.

Pakistan also wishes to convey its sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, for the skilful and productive manner in which he guided the Assembly's work over the past year.

As we seek to build the structures for peace and prosperity on the eve of a new millennium, the United Nations has become even more indispensable. In an increasingly interdependent world, the United Nations is the only organization where nations can come together and evolve decisions democratically on critical social and political issues which affect all peoples. Pakistan has profound faith in the purposes and the promise of the United Nations.

I wish to pay a warm tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has moved to revive the United Nations with bold reforms. These reforms must reinforce the democratic ethos of the United Nations, especially in the Security Council, where the endeavour of some is to create new centres of privilege rather than eliminate old inequalities. The reform we pursue must be inspired by the noble vision of the United Nations Charter: social justice, universal prosperity and global peace and security. To do anything else is to do less than history demands of us.

We are living in times of change and promise. The days of global confrontation are gone and doctrines of containment have lost relevance. The information and technological revolutions have brought about a phenomenal interaction among the peoples of the world. The global village is a reality. Today, the prosperity of one region supplements and supports that of another. The creed of our times must be partnership for peace and development. It will be an irony if the new vision and possibilities are lost because of narrow prejudices and interests.

The world is also pervaded with a deep sense of foreboding. We are being propelled into a future which appears anarchic and insecure. In recent months, the triumphal hopes for the spread of free markets, democratic freedoms and world peace have suffered sobering setbacks. The crisis spreading from the erstwhile economic dynamo of East Asia has shaken confidence in the prescriptions of trade and financial liberalization. With falling incomes and failing hopes, strife has spread among and within nations in virtually every part of the world. This will negate the emerging prospects for ending hunger, disease and ignorance universally.

New conflicts have appeared, while many old problems persist. The people of Kashmir and Palestine continue to suffer. Bosnia has seen a brutal war, and now Kosovo dreads the same fate. Internecine wars have scarred Africa. Afghanistan has yet to recover from the ravages of conflict. Peace has remained elusive in the Middle East. Tensions have been heightened in South Asia. There is increasing resort to the unilateral use of force and arbitrary actions against weaker nations. The multiple conflicts and suffering around the world have placed extraordinary demands on the United Nations.

We are pained by the continuing tragedy of Palestine. The promise of peace has turned to despair and desperation. Peace cannot be achieved without the realization of the right of self-determination and statehood of the Palestinian people.

Seventeen years of war have completely destroyed Afghanistan — its economy, society and polity. Pakistan has, more than any other country, borne the consequences of Afghanistan's turmoil and suffering. We have a vital interest in the restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is deeply concerned at the current tensions between Iran and Afghanistan. We will continue to do all we can to promote peaceful and friendly relations between these two fraternal neighbours. Those responsible for the outrageous killing of the personnel seized from the Iranian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif must be apprehended and punished. We call for the release of all remaining Iranian personnel and other prisoners held by the parties to the Afghan conflict. We support a United Nations and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) fact-finding mission to Afghanistan

We urge reconciliation within Afghanistan through realistic compromise and mutual accommodation. We call for international engagement and dialogue with Afghanistan to promote the objectives of humanitarianism, human rights and peace. We ask for respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and observance of the principles of non-interference and non-use of force.

This year the nuclear cloud has cast its dark shadow over South Asia. When India conducted its first explosion in 1974, the reaction of the major Powers was to impose restraints against Pakistan. We felt compelled to acquire a matching capability. Yet, even after we had done so, Pakistan continued to promote a nuclear-weapons-free zone, conventional arms restraint and a zero-missile zone in South Asia. India rejected all these initiatives.

India's nuclear tests in May should not have come as a surprise to the world. We had warned the world several weeks before the tests. Even after India conducted its tests, the response of the major Powers was weak and ambiguous. Once again, greater energy was devoted to restraining Pakistan than in responding to India.

Immediately after its nuclear tests, India's leaders adopted a belligerent posture towards Pakistan. They told us that the geostrategic balance had changed and that Pakistan should abandon its principled support for Kashmiri self-determination. Pakistan faced the threat of force. We felt compelled to convince India that any military aggression against Pakistan would have the most disastrous consequences.

The world must appreciate that Pakistan did not initiate these tests. India tested to alter the strategic balance and threatened our security and sovereignty. We waited for 17 days for the world to respond. We knew that no country could provide us security assurances against a nuclear India. Thus circumstances forced us to test and establish nuclear deterrence in self-defence. We have violated no international norm. Regrettably, some friendly countries have imposed sanctions and other restrictions against Pakistan. These are unjust. I ask the international community to determine who is in the wrong and why Pakistan should be subjected to punitive measures.

Pakistan's nuclear tests were conducted not to challenge the existing non-proliferation regime, nor to fulfil any great power ambition; they were designed to prevent the threat or use of force against Pakistan. Our tests, in response to those of India, thus served the cause of peace and stability in our region.

We are not insensitive to the concerns aroused by the South Asian nuclear tests. Despite the transformed strategic situation, we remain opposed to an arms race, nuclear or conventional. We have announced a unilateral moratorium on testing. We are prepared to strengthen peace and stability in the region by mutually agreed measures to avoid a war, to create a regime for nuclear restraint and conventional balance and to promote solutions to the underlying causes of conflict, in particular the Kashmir dispute.

We will discuss these issues with India when our dialogue commences. We are also engaged in a dialogue with several friendly countries to advance these objectives. Pakistan has never contributed to nuclear proliferation. We will continue to adhere strictly to our policy of not exporting sensitive technologies and equipment.

Pakistan consistently supported the conclusion of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for over 30 years. We voted for the Treaty when it was adopted by the General Assembly in 1996. We have declared a moratorium on further testing; so has India. There is no reason why the two countries cannot adhere to the CTBT. In a nuclearized South Asia, the CTBT would have relevance if Pakistan and India were both parties to the Treaty. The Non-Aligned Summit has called for universal adherence to the CTBT, especially by the nuclear-weapon States. This demand is consistent with the Treaty's requirement that all nuclear-capable States, including India, must adhere to the CTBT before it can come into force. Pakistan will oppose any attempt to change this fundamental requirement at the conference of States parties to the Treaty, scheduled to be held in September 1999. Such a change can be made only by consensus. Pakistan is therefore prepared to adhere to the CTBT before that conference takes place. However, Pakistan's adherence to the Treaty will take place only in conditions free from coercion or pressure.

In this regard, we expect that the arbitrary restrictions imposed on Pakistan by multilateral institutions will be speedily removed. We also expect discriminatory sanctions against Pakistan to be lifted. And we count on the full support of the world community for a just resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

On the nuclear issue, Pakistan will insist on the principle of equal treatment with India, whether in terms of status or any kind of incentives. It must also be well understood that if India should resume nuclear testing, Pakistan will review its position and, if we have adhered to the CTBT, invoke the supreme interests clause as provided for under article IX of the Treaty.

Nuclear deterrence between Pakistan and India will remain fragile and dangerous as long as there is a growing imbalance in conventional forces. This needs to be redressed. Above all, durable peace between Pakistan and India and restraint in their military postures will be, as always, critically dependent on the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, which has been the root cause of all conflicts and tensions between Pakistan and India.

We welcome the recognition in the Secretary-General's annual report that the

> "rising tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir and other issues is ... a major cause of concern" **(A/53/1, para. 18)**.

For almost 50 years, the people of Kashmir have continued to await the exercise of the right of self-determination, as stipulated in the Security Council's resolutions. India is obliged to allow the plebiscite prescribed in those United Nations resolutions. India has, however, failed to honour its commitments and resorted instead to a policy based on force to deny the legitimate rights of the Kashmiri people.

Ten years ago, Kashmir's freedom struggle entered a new phase when Indian forces fired on peaceful Kashmiri demonstrators, killing over 100. Kashmir is now occupied by a force of 650,000 Indian troops. Over 60,000 Kashmiris have been killed and thousands maimed and arrested. Custodial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and summary executions continue to be daily occurrences. The nightmare of the Kashmiri people continues. This year, moreover, scores of innocent Kashmiris in Azad Kashmir have been killed and hundreds injured by intensified Indian artillery and mortar fire. Even as I speak, tensions are high on the line of control.

My Government is committed to resolving our problem with India through dialogue. This is all the more important in a nuclear environment in which neither side has the luxury to contemplate the use of force. In June 1997, we agreed with India on an eight-item agenda and a mechanism for the dialogue. Unfortunately, the dialogue was interrupted due to differences over modalities. I am, however, happy to say that in a meeting which concluded a short while ago, Prime Minister Vajpayee and I reached an agreement to resume the dialogue with the commencement of talks at the Foreign Secretary level, which will address at the outset the primary issues of peace and security and Jammu and Kashmir.

The United Nations, the major Powers and the international community have a responsibility to support and facilitate a solution to the Kashmir issue. We request the Secretary-General to take appropriate initiatives to implement Security Council resolutions on Kashmir and to ease tensions and build confidence. In particular, we urge that the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan be strengthened and its mandate enhanced. The Security Council should regularly monitor the volatile situation along the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir.

Until last year, globalization of the world economy promised the spread of prosperity. Today, 30 per cent of the world economy is in recession; by next year, this figure is projected to double. Across East Asia, currencies have drastically depreciated, economies have contracted, incomes have plummeted and unemployment has risen, despite sound economic fundamentals.

As the East Asian crisis spreads, questions are being posed about the economic wisdom of rapid financial and trade liberalization and the social implications of globalization. Yet, in the age of the information and communications revolution, globalization cannot be reversed; it can only be effectively governed.

The world community must adopt a coherent approach to the current crisis. In the short term, it is essential to spur economic growth in all parts of the world. The international financial institutions must relax their unrealistic conditionalities to prevent any further contraction of the economies of the developing countries. Mechanisms need to be devised to direct greater development finance to the underdeveloped countries which have the largest latent demand. Meanwhile, markets, especially those of the industrial countries, must

be kept open. New protectionism in the guise of concern for environmental or labour standards must be resisted.

In order to address these issues effectively, we have to proceed from three basic premises. First, decisions on ways to manage globalization must be made collectively by all nations. Secondly, specific policies must flow from the overriding objective of ensuring growth with equity: equity is not only a moral imperative, it is now a prerequisite for sustained global growth. Thirdly, the North and South must act together: prosperity for both is interlinked.

This suggests the need for concerted action by the international community, which should include, first, the strengthening of the capacity of multilateral institutions to address the issues of trade, finance and development in an integrated and coherent manner, thereby ensuring the effective governance of globalization. In this context, a global monetary conference to address the old and new problems of the international finance system is now a necessity and should be convened urgently by the United Nations. Secondly, this action should include correcting the inequities in the international trade regime, especially by more rapid liberalization in areas of primary interest to developing countries. And finally, it should include resolution of the long-standing issues of debt, development finance and access to technology.

What is required today is a realization that there is unity in the struggle of the South and the North for economic and social development. A new concept of a global community appears to be essential: a community where all human beings are acknowledged as being entitled to a life of dignity and to the right to development.

The concept of the *ummah*, or community, in Islamic thought offers a model for the realization of such a global community. This concept gives primacy to solidarity among human beings and to equitable benefits to all members of the community. Islam is the religion of peace and tolerance; it is inherently moderate and progressive. Here, I would like to warmly welcome President Clinton's vision affirming America's deep respect for Islam and rejecting the pernicious thesis of a clash of civilizations. We must work together to create greater understanding and harmony among all religions and peoples of the world.

The present drift towards an uncertain and dangerous world must be arrested. Inequality, conflicts and abuse of human rights are not the inevitable consequences of impersonal forces of history. They are the outcome of our own actions. It is in our power to fashion a more equitable and more peaceful world. We can do so if we rededicate ourselves to the ideals of the United Nations Charter. Only then can we ensure that the next century will dawn on a prosperous and peaceful world.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, His Excellency Mr. Jaime Gama.

Mr. Gama (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): It is with the greatest pleasure that I congratulate my colleague from Uruguay, Didier Opertti, on his election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. In his election I see the recognition of the role played internationally by the Republic of Uruguay, an Ibero-American country and a friend of Portugal, as well as our appreciation and our confidence that his personal, intellectual and professional qualities will result in success in our work.

I would also like to pay tribute to the outgoing President, Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, for the dedicated and competent manner in which he steered the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

To the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, I renew my tribute for the remarkable manner in which he has been carrying out his difficult functions during a period in which the United Nations is increasingly called upon to intervene in many aspects of international life.

I would like to dwell upon some questions of particular importance to my country, beginning with those of a political nature, including Africa. I recall that my Austrian colleague has already addressed the Assembly on behalf of the 15 States members of the European Union.

When releasing last April his excellent report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of lasting peace and sustainable development in Africa, the Secretary-General did not hesitate to qualify as "colossal" (*S/1998/318, para. 5*) the scale of the human tragedy that persists in

parts of the African continent, which has been devastated by the conflicts that have affected a number of States since the end of the cold war.

Within its possibilities and in accordance with the historical, cultural and social ties that bind it to many regions and countries of Africa, Portugal continues to make efforts towards helping overcome those conflicts by peaceful means and towards the promotion of economic development, social progress and good governance, which are indispensable for their eradication. I would like to underline the readiness Portugal has shown to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions, particularly in Africa. By way of example, I recall the role played by Portuguese forces within the framework of the peace process in Mozambique, and in the ongoing United Nations missions in Angola, in Western Sahara and, most recently, in the Central African Republic, as well as in the evacuation operations undertaken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Guinea-Bissau.

I must express here the very serious concern of my country at the situation in Angola, a country to which we are bound by so many and such deep ties. The signs of rupture are becoming more dangerously evident in the peace process, which has proceeded with such difficulty. The refusal by the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) to comply fully with the obligations of the Lusaka Protocol, which it freely signed, with regard to its demilitarization and transformation into a political party, and its obstruction of the normalization of State administration contribute to the resort to military options outside the framework of the negotiated solutions adopted by the international community.

As a member of the troika of observer countries to the Angolan peace process and as one of countries that contributed most to the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) and to the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA), Portugal remains committed to promoting concord in Angola in close cooperation with the United Nations and, in particular, with the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Issa Diallo, whose difficult mission should be helped and supported.

We are, however, fully aware of the fact that all the diplomatic efforts will be in vain if those responsible in Angola do not have an effective will for peace. The Government and UNITA must assume their responsibilities to the Angolan people, whose right to peace, security and well-being is legitimate and inalienable. We appeal, once again, for the Lusaka Protocol to be respected, and in particular appeal to UNITA to assure immediately the Protocol's implementation, in strict accordance with the terms that have been demanded of it by the Security Council.

The gains of a multi-party system in Angola must not be jeopardized. Its participants, particularly having endorsed peace and national reconciliation, must not see the erection of barriers to the respective mandates, and all must be given the conditions of security necessary to face the reconstruction of the country.

The Secretary-General deserves our full support in continuing to promote all the necessary responses that the gravity of the situation requires from the international community.

Guinea-Bissau — a friend of Portugal with which we also share many varied and strong affinities — has since June been the site of a conflict that has had grave human, economic and social consequences for its people. At the express request of the parties to the conflict, Portugal and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) — which is principally made up of African countries, and has among its main goals the political and diplomatic coordination of its members' policies — carried out from the start mediation efforts designed to stop the fighting, obtain a negotiated solution to the conflict and bring humanitarian assistance to the population of Guinea-Bissau. At no time was it possible to doubt the legitimate intentions that led the CPLP, of which Guinea-Bissau is a founding member, to respond to the request made to it. The CPLP's intervention aligned itself with that of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), eventually permitting the signature of a ceasefire agreement between the Government and the military junta, which opened the way to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

Still on the African continent, a word is also due on the events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We defend unequivocally the need to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of that vast country, whose stability is strategically essential to the region in which it is located. We support unconditionally the African peace initiatives that seek a negotiated and peaceful solution to the complex political problems of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are at the heart of the conflict and cannot and should not have a solution based on the use of force or on the presence of foreign military forces.

Notwithstanding continued difficulties, we still believe in a democratic, free and prosperous future for Africa. We are therefore committed to bringing to fruition the initiative we launched in 1996 to hold a summit between the European Union and Africa, which is now scheduled for 2000. We therefore welcomed with satisfaction the decision taken by the most recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Ouagadougou to endorse that initiative.

I would now like to refer to another source of serious and justified concern for the international community, this time on the European continent: the crisis in Kosovo, which jeopardizes peace and stability in the Balkans and is producing heavy human losses, in terms of deaths, injuries, internally displaced persons and refugees. There can be no doubt as to who bears the primary responsibility for the eruption of the current crisis. The adoption a few minutes ago by the Security Council of a resolution co-sponsored by Portugal is a clear signal of the determination of the international community and cannot be ignored by those to whom it is addressed.

Portugal welcomes the constructive spirit that dominated the most recent round of ministerial talks on the question of East Timor, held under the auspices of the Secretary-General, whose efforts at mediation, as well as those of his Special Representative, Ambassador Marker and his collaborators, I would especially like to congratulate. I believe I can, for the first time, say that effective and promising steps have been taken towards creating the conditions to achieve a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to this problem, with full respect for the legitimate rights of the East Timorese people, in accordance with the principles of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

While safeguarding the basic positions of principle of the parties, it was agreed to negotiate for East Timor a wide-ranging autonomy that we wish to see rest on genuinely democratic and participatory rules for its people, who, it is hoped, will progressively establish an ample degree of self-government. It was also agreed to associate more closely the East Timorese — whose will, freely expressed in accordance with their legitimate right to self-determination, will be essential to validate any definitive solution to the question — with the process of negotiations under way, entrusting the Secretary-General with the responsibility of promoting that wide consultation.

It is necessary now to achieve tangible progress with regard to the more critical aspects of the situation in the territory, such as the reduction of the Indonesian military presence, the release of all East Timorese political prisoners, including Xanana Gusmao, and the monitoring by the United Nations of the evolution of the situation on the ground.

We believe that we are still at a turning point. Nothing substantial has yet been settled or guaranteed. That is why we consider it essential that the international community continue to follow closely the evolution of this process in its varied aspects, so that the goal of finally enabling the people of East Timor to enjoy a future of freedom, peace and security is not delayed any further.

In just over a year, on 20 December 1999, the territory of Macao, currently under Portuguese administration, will return to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China, in fulfilment of the terms of the Luso-Chinese Joint Declaration of 13 April 1987. The transition process has been carried out in a constructive and pragmatic climate, reflecting the good relations that exist between the two countries. We are convinced that this climate will persist until the end, thus guaranteeing a transfer of power conducive to the future stability and prosperity of Macao, while respecting its autonomy and uniqueness.

As a short note on the question of official development assistance, I would like to put on record that, according to data on 1997 recently issued by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Portugal was the donor that registered the largest increase in this type of aid — 27.3 per cent.

Within the framework of the International Year of the Oceans, Portugal dedicated the last World Exposition of this century — EXPO '98 — to the theme "The oceans: a heritage for the future", attempting in this manner to contribute to a progressive enlightenment of humanity with regard to the risks and challenges related to the preservation of the oceans.

Still in this area, Portugal has participated actively in various activities undertaken in the context of the United Nations, namely at the level of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Independent World Commission on the Oceans. In fact, Portugal was granted the honour of the presidency of the latter, in the person of Dr. Mario Soares, and its work led to the adoption of the report approved in Lisbon at the beginning of this

month, which appeals for a democratic, equitable and peaceful management of the "ocean ... our future", and which will be submitted to the General Assembly.

Portugal is a non-permanent member of the Security Council until the end of this year. We have sought to contribute effectively to the strengthening of the Council's authority and the effectiveness of its action, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. On the other hand, increasing the transparency and democratic nature of its functioning is essential to us, allowing, in this way, non-members to better follow the work of the Council.

This year, as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, none can purport to defend international law and legitimacy while ignoring the fulfilment of those fundamental rights.

Terrorism is one of the most perverse forms of human rights violation, and a coordinated international effort to combat it is urgently required.

I should like to mention that Portugal is a candidate for membership in the Commission on Human Rights, for a mandate that will begin in January 2000 and that will coincide with the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union.

In an era of globalization — of markets, information, circulation of people and cultural exchange — we also have a duty to include in the international agenda the globalization of human rights. This will be the best tribute we can pay to the Universal Declaration that was issued 50 years ago.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, His Excellency Mr. Borys Tarasyuk.

Mr. Tarasyuk (Ukraine): On behalf of my delegation, I extend to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the high post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We wish you every success in discharging your very responsible mission.

I would also like to express my profound acknowledgement to the President of the General Assembly at its previous session, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, who also happens to be my predecessor as Ukraine's Foreign Minister, for his efficient and fruitful work here. I believe that the results of the fifty-second session deserve our positive evaluation, for they gave a strong impetus to the process of a wide-scale reshaping and strengthening of the United Nations. The last session will undoubtedly enter history as the session of reform. I am very pleased to note that many previous speakers have attributed those achievements to a large extent to the skilful and fair presidency of the Ukrainian representative. This provides undeniable evidence that our nation is not only a consistent supporter of, but also an active participant in, the process aimed at reforming the Organization.

May I also applaud Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose tireless efforts to initiate and promote this challenging goal deserve not only words of praise but, first and foremost, our active support.

The efficiency of the future functioning of the United Nations will be determined by its ability to respond adequately to the challenges confronting humanity at the start of the twenty-first century. The promotion of an interrelated and integral world, the search for universal human harmony, the protection and further development of the values of our civilization, and free access to them — these are the main priorities on which the United Nations should concentrate its authority and attention.

It is widely acknowledged that the main feature of the present development of the world community is the globalization of political, social, economic and humanitarian life. The advanced development of information and communication technologies and the interdependence of the economic progress of countries, with their closely interwoven market of goods, capital and labour, bring together local processes, separate events, States and international institutions into a worldwide network. A great advantage of globalization is the possibility of resolving problems of individual regions and countries by using the world's experiences and the approaches that have proved to be most efficient.

On the other hand, recent years have been marked by some of the adverse effects of globalization. The financial crisis in Asia and Russia, whose repercussions have been acutely felt all over the world, has become a subject of special preoccupation in almost every country. In this regard, Ukraine fully shares the view that the social and economic impact of globalization should become a top priority on the agenda of the world community today.

The United Nations, which bears responsibility for international stability and sustainable economic development, has to find the means and tools that could help overcome the negative impact of globalization. In this respect, I wish to recall and reiterate the initiative of the President of Ukraine, officially announced in this Hall in 1995, to establish a new United Nations economic security council. In the meantime, Member States could also entrust the Security Council with additional assignments and the responsibility to deal with economic and social challenges that have direct repercussions for international peace and security.

Furthermore, there are other issues which cause discord and division among nations. These are the problems of national minorities, deported peoples, refugees, the spread of terrorism and organized crime, illicit drug-trafficking and money-laundering.

These challenges require greater responsibility on the part of individual countries and their leaders for their own policies, as well as concerted efforts by the world community to counteract them. All that means that the United Nations, as never before, faces the urgent task of harmonizing all human and national interests and creating a world order whereby a national idea is not opposed to global solutions. Hence, Member States should care more for regional and universal security in order to maintain peace and stability without prejudice to their national interests.

Events of last summer once again highlighted the issue of nuclear non-proliferation as pivotal for the world community. This issue remains a cornerstone and fundamental principle of preserving the world from a global conflict. Nuclear tests conducted by two nations in confrontation testify to the increasing urgency of expediting the entry into force of international agreements in the field of nuclear disarmament, as well as the need to ban other types of weapons of mass destruction.

The issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has a special meaning for Ukraine as a nation which inherited the world's third largest nuclear arsenal and voluntarily renounced it and which suffered from the largest technogenic disaster of this century in Chernobyl. Ukraine has made an unprecedented and exemplary decision to initiate the process of practical nuclear disarmament, and it strictly honours its obligations undertaken in this field. That is why we believe that we have the moral right to urge other countries, first and foremost nuclear ones, to pursue further reductions and, in the long run, to destroy totally their nuclear potentials. We also call upon the so-called threshold nations to abandon their nuclear ambitions.

The world community should take effective measures to create reliable mechanisms for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and control over the implementation of relevant international agreements. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is in fact the only internationally binding document that consolidates the world community around the concept of global security. Hence, we have to substantially revitalize the efforts of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for its support.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), signed by most United Nations Member States, is also of exceptional significance. Ukraine, as one of its first signatories, calls upon the States which hesitate to accede to it to make this document effective as soon as possible. As a positive example, it is worthwhile to note the recent signing of the CTBT by Brazil and Spain. We welcome this important decision by these two friendly countries.

For many years, the Conference on Disarmament has been playing an important role as a catalyst in freeing humanity from the burden of armaments, first and foremost, the nuclear ones. Ukraine, which a few years ago joined that body as a full member, continues to contribute to the success of its activity. I am glad to mention that it was under the presidency of Ukraine's representative at the Conference that the elaboration of the treaty of the prohibition of fissile material reached its final stage. As other priorities for the Conference, we are considering elaboration of a programme of global nuclear disarmament and of a multilateral agreement on granting security guarantees to non-nuclear nations by the nuclear Powers.

The contemporary age which has replaced the period of global confrontation has set new challenges before the United Nations in the field of international security. These include the growing numbers of local, mostly inter-ethnic conflicts inside countries, which cause civil wars and involve other nations. Moreover, these conflicts spread across regions or even turn into major international conflicts and become the source of global instability. We are deeply convinced that the international community must not be reconciled to the age of "cold war" being replaced by the age of "hot peace". Finding an adequate remedy to these dangerous phenomena is one

of the main issues that the United Nations should address today.

Ukraine, with a population of over 50 million comprising 100 nationalities, has always pursued the policy of maintaining stability and social accord in its society. For seven years of its independent existence, our country, contrary to pessimistic predictions, has succeeded in avoiding ethnic tensions, regional division or fragmentation of the society. This has been possible thanks to the persistent efforts of all branches of State power aimed at the comprehensive development of democratic institutions and legal protection of national minorities. This policy is enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine that was adopted two years ago.

Conflict prevention remains one of the biggest challenges for the United Nations, especially the Security Council. It requires constant attention to potential sources of tension and immediate and adequate measures to prevent these tension points from growing into bigger conflicts. In this context, I would like to underscore the pressing need for strengthening the mechanism of United Nations global monitoring and early warning of threats to international peace and security in order to facilitate the Security Council's readiness for a timely and efficient response.

An important role in this respect is played by international sanctions which make it possible to exert pressure without resorting to force. We believe, however, that the mechanism of introducing sanctions requires serious improvement. First of all, there is urgent need to work out an efficient tool for compensation for losses incurred by third countries observing the sanctions. Regrettably, all previous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly to assist such countries so far remain unimplemented, leaving some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular, to cope on their own with their uncompensated economic losses.

It is a recognized fact that peace and stability on the European continent are an inseparable part of the global security system. Ukraine views the future architecture of European security as one based on the principles of comprehensiveness, indivisibility and partnership. This fundamental position determines our country's active cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic security structures, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Western European Union. Ukraine also actively advocates the further strengthening of the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as an important all-European tool for safeguarding stability on the continent by means of political mediation, protection of human and minorities' rights, strengthening of democracy and humanitarian activity. Closer cooperation and coordination of efforts between the United Nations and the OSCE should be established by making it a good practice to organize regular meetings between senior officials of the two organizations.

For Ukraine, a country of Central and Eastern Europe, establishment of friendly and partnership relations with its neighbours is of great importance. In line with this policy, last June Kiev hosted the first round of expert consultations among a number of Black Sea States to work out joint confidence-building and security measures in the naval military field in the Black Sea region. Thus, actively shaping a favourable security environment, Ukraine is asserting itself as a natural strategic link between various regions, for the North and South, East and West. That is why it was not accidental that the initiative of Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma to convene in September 1999 in Yalta an international summit conference entitled "The Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation: towards an integrated Europe of the twenty-first century without dividing lines" has received broad support.

Contributing to the solution of vital global issues by fostering internal harmony in society, projecting stability on its environment through its active participation in non-proliferation and peacekeeping, by shaping a vast network of regional cooperation, Ukraine, as one of the United Nations founding members, gives top priority to strengthening international peace and security and aspires to be elected next year as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2000-2001.

This year the world community is marking the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping activities. Over past decades, peacekeeping operations have grown into an effective instrument of preventing the escalation of armed conflicts. While it is true that not all of the United Nations peacekeeping missions have been equally successful, the overall evaluation of United Nations activities in this field should be considered positive. Despite enduring hardship conditions, and often at risk to their health and even their lives, the "Blue Helmets" courageously perform a noble mission of bringing peace to peoples in the planet's trouble spots. In this regard, I have the honour to propose that the Assembly adopt at the special commemorative meeting to be held on 6 October a declaration in commemoration of

those who served in United Nations peacekeeping operations, an idea initiated by Ukraine.

The recent practice of peacekeeping in various regions of the world demands the development of a comprehensive basic document comprising the conceptual principles of a new generation of peacekeeping operations. These principles should have an integrated block of military, civil, humanitarian, political, legal and other aspects of such operations. We are convinced that strengthening the United Nations peacekeeping potential should become an integral component of the process of United Nations reform.

In this context, I should like to reiterate the need to reinforce the United Nations rapid reaction capabilities by perfecting the United Nations standby arrangements and making energetic efforts to set up the rapidly deployable mission headquarters. Ukraine has made a practical contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations, in particular in the former Yugoslavia and in some of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries. We are ready to continue our active participation in peacekeeping and to commit additional resources to United Nations standby arrangements.

Our country supports all measures necessary to enhance the security of United Nations peacekeepers and missions. In this regard, we call upon those States which have not done so to accede to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel in order to facilitate its entry into force as soon as possible.

While globalization has become a driving force at the international level, and liberalization and economic reforms a dominating tendency within nations, international economic cooperation based on the principles of non-discrimination, fair competition, partnership and mutual benefit has become increasingly relevant. The United Nations should continue to play a leading role in creating effective mechanisms for such cooperation.

We believe that the Organization's social and economic activities should focus more on countries with economies in transition to accelerate their integration into the world economy. International assistance will be helpful for a smoother conduct of economic reforms in such countries and for overcoming the inevitable difficulties in transforming national economies. Subsequently, these nations will achieve a level of economic development and thus be able to help other countries. The experience of some countries of Central and Eastern Europe proves that such a prospect is quite possible.

Based on this knowledge, Ukraine's course towards the complete and comprehensive integration of its national economy into the European and global economic systems remains unchanged.

I should like to place special emphasis on Ukraine's strategy of integration into the European Union, endorsed by the President of our country. This strategy provides for the harmonization of national legislation and the intensive development of trade and economic relations with European Union members based on the partnership and cooperation agreement that entered into force last March. I avail myself of this opportunity to commend the countries of the European Union for their support, so clearly expressed by the Austrian Presidency.

We attach great importance to the regional component of international economic cooperation. Ukraine was one of the initiators of the regional economic process within the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and of the BSEC's establishment as a fully fledged international organization. We think that today the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organization has full grounds for claiming observer status in the General Assembly.

This year we are also marking another event of historic significance: the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has become a milestone in the quest of the individual to find his or her own identity in society. This Declaration provided a powerful impetus to the development of the international system of protection of human rights, the creation of the relevant branch of international law, and the introduction of a ramified system of control over the fulfilment by States of their commitments in the field of human rights.

The Declaration remains a crucial element of all human rights activities within the United Nations and a model for constitutional practice in many parts of the world. For instance, the Constitution of Ukraine, which provides that safeguarding human rights and freedoms make up the essence of national policy, is based on the humanistic ideas of the Declaration.

An entire series of events dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of this Universal Declaration is under way in Ukraine. The most important of them was the

International Conference organized early this month in Yalta by our Government together with the United Nations Development Programme, which was attended by representatives from 27 countries and a number of international organizations; a booklet on that Conference has been circulated to members. A new Yalta spirit associated with the observance of human rights and freedoms was proclaimed at the Conference. This spirit is best protected in the context of the growing role of international law.

I believe that it is a matter of honour for all States Members of this Organization to strictly abide by their commitments to the United Nations Charter and the fundamental principles of international law, in particular as regards respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the strengthening of the role of preventive diplomacy.

Ukraine supports the proposals to strengthen the International Court of Justice, which reflects the increasing tendency to resolve international disputes by means of law. The Security Council and other United Nations bodies should consider making better use of the International Court's potential when dealing with international disputes.

Equally important is the setting up of the International Criminal Court, which should be considered in the context of the global changes that have taken shape after the end of the cold war. The importance of this international judicial institution is supported by the fact that its jurisdiction covers the most serious crimes committed against humankind.

Following the recognized principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, Ukraine rigorously adheres to its commitments under international instruments and to the standards and rules of its national legislation, which are applied in accordance with the norms of international law.

The decisions on United Nations reform adopted at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly represent only an initial stage of the Organization's sweeping transformation. Painstaking work is needed to translate them into practice so that the United Nations can enter the new millennium renewed and able efficiently to address the persisting challenges of the present time.

It is therefore necessary to continue with wide-scale structural adjustments and the reorganization of United Nations programme activities to make them more results-oriented, businesslike and tailored to the needs of the Member States.

The key issue in renewing the United Nations is the reform of the Security Council. Unfortunately, prompt resolution of this fundamental question does not appear to be forthcoming, as the issue has obviously stagnated. It is in the interest of the international community as a whole to make every effort to achieve a consensus decision on the reform of this important United Nations body. It is impossible to imagine a reformed United Nations without this crucial issue having been resolved.

To make decisive progress in shaping a more reliable and predictable world and promoting economic prosperity, social justice and ecological safety, we must demonstrate perseverance, courage and political will. Near-universal membership, a far-reaching mandate, a broad spectrum of activities and the institutionalized presence of the United Nations at many levels can and should bring it to the centre of these efforts.

The authority and efficiency of this world Organization depend entirely on the membership. If we wish to see the United Nations truly reformed and revitalized, we must prove it by our practical deeds. We must prove that people can continue to rely on the United Nations and that our Organization is prepared to respond to new challenges and withstand any tests.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, Mr. José Miguel Insulza, on whom I now call.

Mr. Insulza (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Government of Chile and in my personal capacity, on your election as President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, which represents a deserved tribute to your political skills and diplomatic career, as well as a recognition of your country's commitment to the work of the United Nations. It gives us very special pleasure because you are a national of Uruguay, a Latin American country that is especially close to Chile, and with which, in addition, we are cooperating closely in the Rio Group and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR).

We also congratulate the Secretary-General on the leadership he has demonstrated since he took up his duties. His vision of the necessary reform of this Organization, as well as his dedication to the solution of important international problems, gives us great

satisfaction. We encourage him to persevere in pursuit of the goals he has set himself.

Globalization, interdependence and regional integration are phenomena that characterize present-day international realities. The experience of many countries, Chile among them, shows that greater participation in the world economy, if appropriately channelled, can constitute a key element in the economic growth and prosperity of countries. Nevertheless, these phenomena, whose logic and dynamics are universal in scope, still offer ambivalent and contradictory lessons and meanings, depending on their magnitude and the effects they are causing in the different parts of the world. It is obvious that this process gives rise to legitimate uncertainties and concern in the context of the financial upheavals that, having started in the Asia/Pacific region, now affect the whole world. The need for more effective and concerted action by the main international economic Powers and the specialized agencies to deal with these situations is becoming increasingly apparent. The need to reshape the global financial architecture is becoming ever more obvious.

It seems clear that there is a need for greater coordination regarding the international community's institutional capabilities to deal with situations like the present one. The world has experienced similar situations before, but they now take place in a context of much greater interdependence. This necessitates an in-depth review of the current structures of the world financial system in order to adapt them to the new challenges of internationalization. Otherwise, we shall always be vulnerable to upheavals like the present ones, and to setbacks in those parts of the world that are affected.

Obviously, no agency of the multilateral system, on its own and using only its own methods, is in a position to bring certainty and stability to the current crisis. In the search for solutions, we need to combine different approaches and concerns: financial order, growth of international trade, effective social security networks, promotion of investment and growth, and respect for workers, among others. We have a great opportunity to grasp fully the integrated nature of these problems and define genuinely coordinated policies in order to solve them. This is a task in which the entire international community must participate. The Latin American countries have assumed their responsibilities for building sound economies with increasingly low levels of inflation, progressively decreasing their budget deficits and reducing unemployment and indebtedness.

What Chile has done in this respect is recognized, and has been frequently praised in recent years. In little over a decade, Chile has doubled the size of its economy. This year, 1998, will be our twelfth year of uninterrupted growth. For eight years we have been constantly reducing inflation and unemployment, with a financial surplus and high domestic and external savings rates. All of this has taken place in a context of great openness to the outside world and a regional integration process conducted with a view to promoting open regionalism. It has also taken place in the context of an increasing expansion of social investment, whose benefits for the most vulnerable sectors of the population are apparent in the high indicators achieved by Chile in this Organization's latest *Human Development Report*.

However, despite these significant achievements we have also had to face in recent months problems that we share with many countries in our region, stemming from the global financial crisis and the difficulties created in some of our main export markets. President Frei's Government has adopted stringent adjustment measures in order to reduce public and private expenditure, avoid an upsurge of inflation, and, at the same time, maintain social investment and protect Chileans' jobs.

This permits us — as the Heads of State and Government of our region did when they met on 5 September at the Twelfth Rio Group Summit — to call on all to discharge their responsibilities in this respect, as we have discharged our own. Our Presidents are concerned about the possibility that the crisis will become more acute, and accordingly they urge the countries in which it arose to take the necessary measures to correct their imbalances; the countries of the Group of Seven to take action to restore the stability of financial markets and ensure the growth of the world economy; and the international financial institutions to involve themselves more rapidly and effectively in resolving the crisis.

There is also a need to prevent a mishandling of the crisis or half-way measures leading to the reproduction or even accentuation of the inequities that characterize the current international system, which not only postpone access to progress and encourage despair, but also pose a serious and constant threat to international peace and security.

The emergence of a new worldwide awareness, the enlargement of the international agenda and the need to deal collectively with the problems of interdependence provide an impetus for the adoption of new international

regimes. Examples of the progress achieved in cooperative multilateralism include the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Antarctic Treaty, international humanitarian law, the Uruguay Round agreements that led to the creation of the World Trade Organization and the set of regimes relating to arms control and disarmament in general.

Human rights have ceased to be an issue reserved exclusively for the sovereignty of countries, and have become a universal concern that no Government can ignore. Protection of the environment has an undoubtedly international dimension, in that issues as vital to our future as climate change, pollution and over-exploitation of the seas, depletion of the ozone layer and the advance of desertification all call for global treatment.

The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms constitute an inescapable responsibility of the United Nations. The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna, constitute opportunities to renew our concern for and commitment to the values and principles embodied in the Declaration and the agreements adopted at the Conference.

For Chile, the universality of human rights means assuming the intrinsic dignity of all inhabitants of the planet, regardless of their culture, religion, social status, ethnic origin, gender or traditions. Neither lack of development nor cultural characteristics can be invoked to justify limiting the human rights recognized in a Declaration to which we have all subscribed. In this context, the recently approved International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up is an important step forward in strengthening the basic rights of workers throughout the world. This new international regime must be promoted by the entire multilateral system.

A few days ago, I had the great honour of signing in Rome, on behalf of my Government, the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Chile has committed itself to participate actively in the launching of the Court. This institution has been a long-standing aspiration, and many recent events have made it essential. It will contribute to the strengthening of the international human rights regime, the progressive development of international humanitarian law, the prevention of mass violations and the fight against impunity in cases of genocide or crimes against humanity.

The subject of disarmament also continues to be one of the most vital issues on the international agenda. Recent events in this field, such as the nuclear tests carried out in South Asia, which my Government deeply deplores, highlight the urgent need to enhance the validity and universal application of instruments such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We must take responsibility for the danger of nuclear proliferation and urge the parties concerned not to repeat such actions, and we must renew our calls on all States to sign and ratify the international instruments designed to eliminate the nuclear threat. Accordingly, we welcome Brazil's recent accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We must also make efforts to develop and improve our instruments for regulating the manufacture, trade and use of conventional weapons. In this context, we are extremely pleased to know that the Treaty on the elimination of anti-personnel landmines has entered into force with the completion of the first 40 ratifications. Chile hopes to complete its process of legislative approval shortly in order to be able to ratify this important instrument. For these same reasons, we adopted this morning, together with other countries, a declaration supporting the ad hoc group in its work to strengthen the verification and monitoring mechanisms of the Biological Weapons Convention.

Chile strongly favours the process of establishing new international regimes, whether regional or global, to confront these and other challenges. The United Nations plays a vital role in this field.

The campaign against drug-trafficking and other forms of organized crime can be truly effective only when it takes place in a context of strong and genuine regional and worldwide cooperation. Chile supports the implementation of the decisions adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, on the world drug problem, decisions which can serve as a basis for a common regulatory system and effective multilateral cooperation.

The fight against international terrorism, which has perpetrated such reprehensible acts this year, also requires a much more effective international cooperation. Such dramatic issues as the treatment of refugees and combating hunger fall fully within the scope of multilateral activity. My country attaches great importance to this function of our Organization. We

believe that it must continue to be expanded and intensified in the years to come. Of course, Chile is fully prepared to continue participating in this task.

In the context of our participation in the United Nations, I wish to express my gratitude to the Member States, as well as to the employers' and workers' groups of the International Labour Organization (ILO), for the singular confidence placed in Chile and its Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Juan Somavia, by electing him Director-General of the ILO, beginning in March 1999.

My Government wishes to express its profound satisfaction at having been a part of the Security Council during the biennium 1996-1997. In the exercise of the responsibility entrusted to us by the international community, my Government sought in every action it took to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and to fully assume the humanitarian responsibility placed upon the Security Council in its activities.

We have always believed that this responsibility should be manifested in the protection of the humanitarian workers in conflict zones, in the ongoing presence of the United Nations and its specialized agencies subsequent to the ending of hostilities so as to build peace effectively and in the focused application of sanctions that are adopted so that they will not affect innocent civilians.

Chile is convinced that the United Nations peacekeeping forces can be identified as the Organization's most effective mechanism for preventing and resolving international conflicts. We are aware that peacekeeping operations designed to take action in crises and conflicts between States have been faced with major challenges during the present decade. Nevertheless, for all the well-known limitations, the experience built up over the past three years can be regarded as promising for the future. Many more human lives could be saved through United Nations peacekeeping operations, were we able to strengthen them effectively. My Government wishes to express its firm resolve to continue cooperating, actively and frequently, in the activities of this important instrument of the Organization.

Three years ago, when we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, Member States assumed a commitment to unite our efforts to reform and democratize the structures of the Organization, with a view to the new and complex challenges we shall have to face in an increasingly changing international scene. This session of the General Assembly has the task of taking up important pending aspects of that reform. The adoption of resolution 52/12 constitutes an important first step down the long road to reform.

We are also encouraged by the changes that are being introduced in the Economic and Social Council. The introduction of new methods and programmes and the incorporation into its agenda of a segment on humanitarian affairs will contribute to its renewal.

The summits and conferences on economic and social issues that have been held within the framework of the United Nations during the 1990s have reaffirmed our Organization's priority commitment to development. Likewise, those events have provided conceptual tools and ideas that are of great value for drawing up public policies for achieving economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development.

The eradication of poverty must continue to be a central objective. The same is true of the promotion of human rights, gender equality and protection of the environment. It is essential that the General Assembly conduct periodic reviews of the commitments made on these issues at the summit meetings and conferences, as is to happen in the case of the International Conference on Population and Development, which is to be reviewed next June, and the Fourth World Conference on Women, the review of which will take place in the year 2000.

We also attach special importance to the special session of the General Assembly to be convened in the year 2000 for the purpose of reviewing compliance with the commitments of the Social Summit. Chile has had the honour of presiding over the preparatory committee for that special session. It is our hope that that meeting will be able to conclude with the adoption of new initiatives at the national and international level that will allow further progress to be made in the process of implementing the agreements reached at the Summit.

The process of reforming and democratizing the Security Council is one of the most important of the many objectives we have set ourselves in the context of the process of renewing the United Nations. The Council must reflect the new international realities. It needs to be enlarged to remedy, among other things, the unjustified under-representation of the developing countries in that body.

Nevertheless, the arduous process of reform in which we are engaged calls for broad-based majority

support. It will be possible only with solid and substantive consensus. Frankly, we would prefer to sacrifice some of the urgency of such reforms rather than participate in a decision-making process which, lacking the support of the vast majority of members, could give rise to serious divisions between us.

Furthermore, my Government believes that enlargement of the Council, important though it may be from the standpoint of enhancing its representativeness and legitimacy, is not of itself sufficient to endow the Council with the qualities required by its role as the guarantor of international peace and security. At the same time, measures must be adopted with regard to its working methods, particularly in relation to transparency, with which every one of its actions should be imbued and which should not be challenged.

We must stress the negative impact of the veto mechanism, which should be regulated and progressively reduced with a view to its gradual elimination in the long term. A first step in this direction might be to amend the Charter so that the right of veto can be applied only to actions taken by the Council under Chapter VII.

I should like to conclude by expressing our optimism with regard to the future of the Organization. I hope that the Millennium Assembly, to which we have lent our full support, will be the expression of a renewed and much stronger United Nations as we enter the new century.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, His Excellency Mr. Abel Matutes, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Matutes (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first, Mr. President, to offer you my sincerest congratulations on your appointment, and to express my satisfaction that the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session will be led by such a distinguished representative of a country with which Spain has excellent relations. I should also like to thank Minister Udovenko for the efficiency with which he presided over the General Assembly during the previous session.

The Foreign Minister of Austria has already set out the main elements of the European Union's position in the United Nations. For my part, I should like to highlight certain issues of particular interest to Spain.

It can generally be said that our Organization is today in a stronger position than in previous years, which were characterized by a predominant feeling of crisis. The major reforms undertaken will enable the United Nations to continue to be the main forum for international cooperation. Dialogue, the promotion of respect for human rights and the development of international life will continue under the auspices of the United Nations. Furthermore, the Organization has consolidated its primary function of maintaining international peace and security.

An essential element of the strengthening process that the United Nations is currently undergoing is greater recognition of the limits that restrict its action. The process of reforming the Organization, which the Secretary-General has set in motion with decisiveness and determination, has contributed significantly to a sense of getting the Organization under control and of renewed confidence in its possibilities. Spain will follow this process very closely so as to support it and ensure that it is brought to a successful conclusion.

The debate on enlarging the membership of the Security Council deserves separate consideration. The difficulties posed by enlarging the permanent membership have been confirmed as negotiations have proceeded. We must not attempt to force decisions that might create divisions within certain regional groups. Reform must reflect, as far as possible, general agreement between the Members of the Organization, and in any case it must respect the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter. We must therefore acknowledge that at present there is no realistic alternative to increasing only the number of non-permanent members.

In order for our Organization to be able to perform satisfactorily its indispensable work, it must be endowed with sufficient funds. The Secretary-General is carrying out a major reform designed to ensure, among other aims, better use of the financial means made available to it by States. However, the current financial situation is very worrying, largely owing to the accumulation of arrears. No State should forget that full and timely payment of its contributions is a legally binding international obligation. In 1999, my country will become the eighth largest contributor to the Organization's budget. We are fully aware of the responsibility this entails and are ready to assume it.

With the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism about to end, I believe it is important to recall that the historic work carried out by the Organization in this field cannot be considered complete

as long as there remain colonial situations such as the one which so painfully affects my country. I am referring, of course, to the question of Gibraltar.

Every year the General Assembly renews its appeals to Spain and the United Kingdom to continue their negotiations with a view to putting an end to the colonial situation of Gibraltar. The current negotiation process stems from the so-called Brussels declaration of 1984, in which the Governments of our two States undertook to establish a negotiation process, to include sovereignty issues, in order to settle all their differences. During the 1997 negotiating round I submitted a proposal that would allow Spain to regain sovereignty over Gibraltar, while maintaining for the inhabitants of the Territory all their current benefits, granting them, in the framework of the Spanish State, a greater degree of political autonomy than they enjoy today, and agreeing, as an additional guarantee of Spain's good faith, to share sovereignty with the United Kingdom for a long transition period.

I believe that that proposal should be able to form the basis of an agreement that would, once and for all, put an end to an anachronistic situation originating from the dynastic wars of the early eighteenth century.

Respect for human rights is essential in guaranteeing the maintenance of international peace and security. Our Organization also plays a prominent role in this field.

The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should provide a powerful incentive to continue to develop international instruments for protecting human rights. The adoption of the statute of the International Criminal Court during the recent Rome Conference marked a very significant step in that direction. Spain firmly supported the adoption of the statute, signed it on the first day, and is prepared to carry out any actions needed to ensure its prompt entry into force.

Likewise, I wish to back the important work performed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and to underline the importance that my country attaches to the work of the Commission on Human Rights, to which it has presented its candidature for the period 2000 to 2002.

Terrorism constitutes a serious threat to domestic and international security, to the development and functioning of democratic institutions throughout the world and to the exercise of human rights. Spain firmly believes in strengthening the machinery of international cooperation, for which the United Nations is a key forum. Spain, which has ratified all conventions adopted on this issue, has already signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and hopes that, as the next step, a convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism can be adopted.

Similarly, Spain gives high priority to the international fight against drugs. This was evidenced by the Spanish Prime Minister's attendance at the special session of the General Assembly in June, which was devoted to this universal problem and which contributed substantially to reaffirming our conviction that it is critical to consolidate international coordination in seeking global solutions based on the principles of shared responsibility, attention to sustainable development and boosting regional and interregional cooperation.

Multilateral development cooperation and poverty eradication are crucial to the establishment of peaceful international coexistence based on respect for human rights. Spain is following with attention the implementation of the reform measures proposed by the Secretary-General. My Government praises the momentum the Secretary-General is giving to the reform of the environmental and human settlement sectors directly linked to development. My country is participating in studying new financing formulas to provide sufficient resources for development cooperation. In this regard, without losing sight of the unavoidable debate on budgetary matters, Spain will consider a possible gradual increase in its voluntary contributions over the next few years.

On the subject of disarmament, Spain will shortly ratify the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; it is pleased with the swift pace of ratification of the Convention. It is likewise of the utmost importance that next year we should succeed in concluding negotiations on a protocol on verification of biological weapons.

As regards nuclear weapons, I cannot but express once again my concern at the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, which go against the international community's efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. Nevertheless, we are optimistic about the forthcoming commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Finally, we are confident that this

progress can be further enhanced by India's and Pakistan's accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Mr. Bellinga-Eboutou (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The chief aim of our Organization continues to be the maintenance of international peace and security. Here the United Nations increasingly uses the means that regional organizations or groups of States place at its disposal. As a result, its response to various crises is becoming more flexible and the legitimizing role of the United Nations now carries more weight. Some good examples, in addition to the Stabilization Force (SFOR) and Operation Alba — to cite two cases in which Spain respectively continues to play and played a particularly prominent role — are initiatives such as the Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), which can speed up United Nations intervention considerably, and in which Spain is also beginning to participate. Moreover, the mediation capacity of the Secretary-General and his representatives has been enhanced even further over the past year.

In this connection, I wish to reaffirm my country's commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security, in the service of which 2,000 Spaniards are currently serving. Indeed, in addition to participating in SFOR, the International Police Task Force (IPTF) and the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), Spain this year sent a police contingent to the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA). Furthermore, Spain intends to sign soon a memorandum of understanding with the Secretariat to define the modalities for making stand-by forces available to the Organization.

Humanitarian assistance operations have come to play an increasingly important role. Aid workers from many countries, including Spain, have lost their lives in these missions. For this reason, my country will continue to promote all measures that can help improve the security and safety of personnel providing humanitarian assistance.

The ongoing process of globalization does not mean the disappearance of the diversity of civilizations and cultures, which coexist with increasing closeness. To the contrary, this diversity itself constitutes a value which must be used to promote solidarity and cooperation among nations. Indeed, serious crises — some of which I shall mention in this statement — continue to afflict the international community; unfortunately too, our ability to take action is still often limited.

The situation in Africa is cause for serious concern, and justifies the special consideration our Organization is giving to African crises. Suffice it to mention the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the tragic humanitarian crisis in Sudan — in the solution of which Spain is making a special effort to cooperate, the precarious situation of Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, and the extremely serious exacerbation of tension in Angola, where UNITA must respect the Lusaka agreements and where the United Nations must continue to give its most valuable support to the peace process.

In Western Sahara, the parties must continue to demonstrate their good will so that the referendum on self-determination envisaged in the Secretary-General's settlement plan can be held. The coming months will undoubtedly be crucial. Spain will continue to back the Secretary-General, his representatives and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

The situation in Kosovo is also extremely serious. Spain backs the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, but President Milosevic and his Government must understand that the international community will not remain impassive in the face of an indiscriminate use of force that is creating a very serious humanitarian problem. A sincere negotiation process should be established as soon as possible to enable Kosovo to regain the necessary political autonomy in Yugoslavia.

In Latin America, the reconciliation process in Guatemala continues to make good headway, despite some tragic incidents, and is an inspiring example. We are confident that the ongoing talks in Colombia will lead to a process of national reconciliation, an objective to which Spain has been giving its fullest support.

As regards the peace process in the Middle East, Spain is deeply concerned about the current standstill and actively backs the different initiatives presented, particularly the European Union proposals, to safeguard this process and implement the commitments already made by the parties. There is an urgent need to put an end to this conflict, which has already lasted too long; it implies a threat to stability, fundamentally in the Mediterranean, but with global repercussions. We must find a solution to achieve a long-lasting reconciliation of the Jewish, Christian and Islamic cultures. Spain is, to a great extent, an example of such reconciliation, and we stand ready to make all necessary efforts to achieve this goal.

Lastly, in Asia, Spain is following with great concern the situation in Afghanistan. In another context, it is confident that the parties will succeed in reaching an agreement to form a Government in Cambodia after the recent elections.

I firmly believe that, after a period of excessive and unjustified hopes and consequent disappointments, now is the time for the United Nations to forge determinedly ahead in fostering an international coexistence based on respect for human rights, justice and solidarity. Nonetheless, this will only be possible if it has the full support of all of us. Spain hereby reiterates its fullest commitment to the United Nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan.

Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic): May I first congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly and wish him every success in this important position.

I would also like to thank his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, and praise him for the tireless energy he devoted to pushing through reform steps in the Organization.

The Assembly is meeting at a time when the world is troubled by many major problems. Let me mention seven which I regard as crucial.

The collapse of stock markets around the world, triggered by the Asian and Russian crises, shows how vulnerable national economies are in our increasingly globalized economy.

Recent nuclear tests conducted by States not parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have jeopardized the progress made in arms control and non-proliferation since the end of the cold war, progress which is vital if global peace is to be achieved.

We have not yet been able to end wars in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world — including Europe, and most notably in the former Yugoslavia, where the conflict in Kosovo remains unresolved.

Terrorism continues to threaten individuals and Governments. The attacks in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam are recent examples of the death and destruction terrorists continue to inflict on innocent people.

Fundamental human rights and freedoms are still being violated and the human dignity of individuals is still being humiliated in many countries on all continents.

The environment continues to be devastated by many aspects of humankind's activity, global warming being one of the particularly ominous effects.

And the gap between the rich and the poor is still widening despite many efforts to challenge hunger and poverty in the developing world.

To address and solve these and other problems, international cooperation is essential. The traditional platform, the United Nations, remains the most suitable for organizing the global efforts and resources needed for this task. These issues are a tremendous challenge to the United Nations, and so it is essential that the capabilities of the United Nations be fully exploited. The Organization must respond to them with flexibility. It must provide realistic plans and procedures for dealing with problems as they arise. And it must exploit the political will necessary to implement programmes once they are put in place.

A country's international reputation is largely dependent on its domestic health. In my country, this year's parliamentary elections resulted in a change of Government. I wish to stress that the top foreign policy priorities of the Czech Republic — joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union — stem from our desire to actively contribute to the implementation of the vision of a united, democratic, peaceful, socially just and prosperous Europe; a Europe without tensions or conflicts; a Europe of free citizens and cooperating regions based on mutual solidarity, human rights and cooperative security.

The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are expected to join the Alliance in 1999. The integration of these countries, we believe, will justify the enlargement of NATO and its contribution to European security. We are keenly aware of our shared responsibility in this matter. We expect NATO's door to remain open for other countries to join when they are ready. The Alliance's present role is not limited to safeguarding the vital interests of its members by means of collective defence. Over time it has made a contribution to global and pan-European security. We are sure that, in close

collaboration with other European security institutions — such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Western European Union and the Council of Europe — NATO will be able to lay foundations for a future all-European security.

Preparing for the next round of enlargement of the European Union, an integration which is unique in the world, is a task for all Europeans. By opening up membership to Central and East European countries last year in Luxembourg, the Union has finally overcome the heritage of a divided continent. We hope the enlargement process will maintain the present momentum and that it will not be hampered by criteria other than the readiness of each candidate country.

Europe has been a contributor to global security. However, it still has to put its own house in order. One of the most complicated European security problems is managing the consequences of the division of the former Yugoslavia and, in particular, the restoration of a self-sustained peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a settlement of the situation in Kosovo in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. We fully endorse the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and believe no better solution is available. The military objectives of the Peace Agreement have practically been met — that is undeniably one of the great successes of the implementation of Dayton. Further progress on the civilian side, however, continues to depend on a substantial international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has to be maintained until the desirable end-state is achieved. That is why the Czech Republic continues to participate in the international Stabilization Force (SFOR) spending national resources both on its military contingent in SFOR and on the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo due to the ongoing conflict has to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Belgrade must be strongly reminded that it has crossed the limits of what is tolerable and legitimate. We welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1199 (1998), adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter just a few hours ago. In our view, this resolution usefully foreshadows the necessary steps for the international community.

The Czech Republic has traditionally paid great attention to the Middle East peace process, and we are concerned to see that little progress has been made. In our view, a positive future for this region can only be secured by successfully completing the peace process, and we believe the process can soon be revitalized.

The Czech Republic also supports the endeavour of the international community to solve the problem of Cyprus. The current status quo is unacceptable. We hope that Cyprus will be united as a federation in accordance with the appropriate United Nations resolutions.

We are deeply concerned to see the deterioration of security and the humanitarian situation in a number of African countries, including in the region of the Great Lakes, in Sudan and elsewhere. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations and its work with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to settle conflicts and stop the human suffering in Africa. Positive developments we can now observe include an improving situation in Sierra Leone, which is a source of our optimism on the issue of Africa. We are ready to assist the various processes at work in Africa, including the dispatching of observers to respective United Nations peacekeeping operations, and in the development of cooperation.

Recent problems in Asia have already been mentioned. Here we are concerned not only with the continuing regional economic and financial crisis and the nuclear tests, but also with enormous natural disasters taking thousands of lives and causing enormous material and environmental damage.

The scourge of international terrorism must be countered vigorously, and in cooperation among all of us, as President Clinton eloquently appealed for at this forum two days ago. This task is high on the agenda of many, and we believe the United Nations, as the global platform, should assert its responsibilities. We endorse all initiatives aimed at cutting terrorists off from any support and resources, isolating them and strictly punishing them.

Being a small country, the Czech Republic is naturally interested in all international efforts aimed at prevention and resolution of armed conflicts. We support United Nations peacekeeping operations and all efforts to make them more effective. I would like to reiterate that my country is committed to contributing further to United Nations peacekeeping operations, refining its own forces to meet the new requirements. Let me point out the increasing number of attacks against the personnel participating in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, and join the call for strict punishment of the perpetrators of these shameful acts.

We support nuclear disarmament and we look forward to the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals. This is why we regard the nuclear tests carried out in May 1998 by countries considered non-nuclear-weapon States as clearly negative steps. Universal compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a logical step on the way towards nuclear disarmament, as is speedy enactment of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). On the other hand, the progress made in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament towards a fissile material cut-off treaty is encouraging.

The Czech Republic appreciates the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the area of chemical disarmament. We are prepared to continue contributing to the work of the Organization and to strictly implement all its commitments arising out of the respective Convention. At the same time, we support all efforts meant to speed up the negotiation of the verification protocol text, which is to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC); we regard the protocol as an important mechanism controlling implementation of the Convention.

The signing of the Ottawa Convention on the complete ban on anti-personnel landmines by about 100 Member States, including the Czech Republic, has been a great success. Now early entry into force has been ensured. Implementation, however, will be an even bigger task for all. While preparing for the ratification of the Ottawa Convention, we have a clear view of its domestic implementation.

It is the Security Council that continues to have the decisive word in questions of peace and security. The Czech Republic considers itself among the reform-minded countries, supporting the Council's enlargement, in both categories of membership, which guarantees equitable geographic representation. To be more specific, we continue supporting the aspirations of the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan in this respect.

It is rather disappointing that after five years of the Working Group's dealing with this issue concrete results have not been achieved. On the contrary, it seems that Member States are even further apart on the issue. Unfortunately, the same applies to the question of improving and simplifying the methods of the Council's work, on which consensus seemed to be near a year ago.

It is our view that the Working Group should continue its work with the aim of achieving general agreement, to the extent possible, until the end of the millennium. We hope that talks will eventually produce concrete results that could be put on the agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly within the Millennium Assembly concept.

The new Government of the Czech Republic attaches great importance to the issue of human rights. This December we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document substantially influencing the international community and international relations.

The record of these 50 years is no doubt impressive, but there is still a long way to go to achieve the desired universal acceptance and indivisibility of human rights. This sad situation can be illustrated by the fact that there are still countries governed by totalitarian regimes where people are punished for such absurd "crimes" as distributing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or for refusing to explain where they obtained such a "subversive document". However, it has to be admitted that economic sanctions or embargoes do not seem to be effective means of persuading a country to promote human rights.

The successful conclusion of the Diplomatic Conference in Rome last July, which resulted in the shaping of the International Criminal Court, fills us with hope. The adoption of the Court's Statute is a clear breakthrough in the area of humanitarian law and human rights protection. We are aware that this is only an initial stage of the long process leading to a functioning Court, but the step taken in Rome was crucial. I would like to express our gratitude to the Government of Italy for its substantial contribution to the success of the Conference.

Cooperation in the social, economic and humanitarian areas should undoubtedly be, in addition to building peace and security, major preoccupations of the United Nations. Over the last few years there have been strong discussions on the Economic and Social Council and its function. The Czech Republic was actively involved during its Council presidency in 1997. The challenge for the Council, stemming from globalization of economic and other links, was enormous. On the other hand, the actual possibilities of this body to tackle substantial issues were rather limited. But now we are pleased to see it undergoing some promising changes.

The Czech Republic appreciates the attention paid by the United Nations to the critical issue of globalization

and its impact on economic and social development in the different countries of the world. For many, like my country, whose economies are undergoing a fundamental transformation, the consequences of globalization are doubly difficult to handle. That is why we would like the United Nations to have a clear agenda on globalization, and we are encouraged by the lead provided by the Secretary-General.

The new Government of the Czech Republic has promised in its Programme Statement wide support for the strengthening of United Nations authority. We have welcomed the results so far achieved in implementing the Secretary-General's plan for United Nations reform. Much of the reform package, however, remains unresolved, and a number of proposals have not left the negotiating table. The Czech Republic supports speedy approval and implementation of the remaining reform proposals. However, even the best blueprints do not count for much without money to implement them. Like others, I want to stress that the financial situation of the Organization is alarming, and I would like to underline that discipline with regard to contributing is a must for all.

We look with expectations to the proposed Millennium Assembly to be held in the year 2000, inspired, among others, by Czech President Václav Havel. The Millennium Summit held within its framework could then focus on the challenges the United Nations will be facing in the next millennium and identify major trends and objectives of future United Nations activities. In addition, an important role could be played by a related non-governmental "Millennium Forum". The Czech Republic's special contribution to such a debate can be "FORUM 2000", a conference taking place in Prague next month aimed at highlighting global problems that humankind faces at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, allow me to express my sincere belief in the eventual success of the United Nations reform process. I think we can all agree that from this process the United Nations, a truly remarkable Organization, will emerge consolidated, strengthened and more capable than ever of solving the problems of the contemporary world — an Organization open to all who are willing to contribute to the fulfilment of this important task.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is Her Excellency, Ms. Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Hjelm-Wallén (Sweden): Let me first of all, through you, Sir, congratulate the President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly upon his election. I am confident that our important work will be guided in a most productive way. I would also like to thank the former President, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his relentless work and creativity to bring about consensus on the Secretary-General's important reform proposals for the United Nations.

Before proceeding to my statement, I would like to report that this afternoon an important resolution on the situation in Kosovo was adopted by the Security Council. The resolution is a firm response to a stark reality. The Council spells out what Belgrade must do now towards achieving a political situation and to avoid a humanitarian disaster. Their deeds and not their words will determine further Security Council action. Also, the Kosovo Albanians must act in accordance with the demands in the resolution. As a Council member, and now as its President, Sweden has worked persistently for such a clear message to be sent by the Security Council. I trust that it will be heard and understood.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made yesterday by my Austrian colleague, Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel, on behalf of the European Union.

Economic turbulence, persistent poverty and environmental degradation provide a sombre background to this session of the General Assembly. So do crises and conflicts, terrorism and nuclear test explosions and, of course, the political and financial realities affecting the United Nations itself.

We receive early warning signals, but early action rarely follows. Isolationism and unilateralism could easily re-emerge.

Many are concerned about the difficulties they face in meeting the requirements of a globalized international community. The positive aspects of globalization — integration and economic progress — offer the best opportunities we have ever known for achieving peace, democracy and development. When trade, economies and financial markets do not recognize any borders, politics must be global as well.

The United Nations has to continue to reform in order to remain relevant. The Swedish Government stands firmly behind the reform efforts of the Secretary-General to streamline the Organization, to focus more on

its core activities and to introduce a stringent and up-to-date management culture.

Member States cannot shy away from their responsibility for the Organization. United Nations reform is not a cost-cutting exercise, but one of rendering the Organization more effective. It cannot be reformed under the threat of political and financial crisis. No Member State has the right to set conditions for fulfilling Charter obligations. All debtors must pay their assessed contribution in full, on time and without conditions.

I will speak today of five key areas for global response, international cooperation and common action.

First, we must strengthen cooperation to eradicate poverty. Poverty is not only lack of material resources. It is also lack of knowledge and influence over one's own life. It is a question of justice. The principle at stake is that of equal rights and opportunities for all. A prerequisite for success in the fight against poverty is that the poor themselves are involved in a partnership based on common ethics and mutual trust.

Democracy, development and peace are closely linked. Empty stomachs do not provide a sustainable ground for democracy. Individual human security and the security of the planet must be given as much recognition as the security of States.

Putting an end to poverty is imperative. Large economic inequalities and lack of civic infrastructure create friction between individuals, between groups, between countries. Marginalization spurs violent conflicts. Security cannot be seen primarily in a military perspective. Development and economic integration play a much greater role in preventing serious conflicts.

In an increasingly globalized world the fight against poverty is a common interest and a common duty. Only on the basis of solidarity can we create a world which respects the equal rights and value of all its people. It will require not only efforts by poor countries, but also by richer countries.

Therefore, I regret that only four countries meet the United Nations aid target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. Sweden is proud to be one of them. The seven largest economies on average contribute only 0.19 per cent.

Free trade still remains to be fully achieved. Remaining barriers which prohibit poor countries from making use of their comparative advantages are counter-productive and must be abolished. The trade policies of industrial countries should also facilitate regional cooperation among developing countries.

The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative must be strengthened, as the debt crisis creates vicious circles for weak economies. The international financial system has proved to be insufficiently adapted to political and social realities.

Secondly, we must strengthen cooperation to promote human rights. Societies which respect human rights are more stable and more peaceful. Repression spurs rebellion, violence breeds violence.

This year we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has given hope to people all over the world. It has inspired human rights advocates to expose violations in their own countries. It has encouraged Governments to take action to protect and monitor respect for human rights. But much remains to be done.

Primitive expressions of public vengeance have no place in a civilized legal system. Today, a majority of the Member States have abolished the death penalty or placed it under a moratorium. This is sometimes done in response to public opinion, but also frequently as a result of political leadership and with the support of international norms and standards.

Economic, social and cultural rights create the basis for a sustainable society with strong democratic participation. The exploitation of children drastically illustrates the importance of these rights. A convention on child labour should be agreed at the next international labour conference, and urgent national and international measures should be taken to combat the most disgusting form of exploitation — child prostitution.

The use of child soldiers is another fundamental and increasingly frequent violation of the rights of the child. It is vital to achieve international standards against involving children under 18 as combatants and to combine this with practical and preventive measures to help and protect children in need.

The rights laid down in the Universal Declaration apply to all. Special norms for vulnerable groups are necessary to ensure that they can be equal with others. The principle of non-discrimination is of particular and

critical importance for individuals who belong to ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities or to indigenous peoples. This principle should be complemented with national mechanisms to ensure effective participation in society. Few measures would be more important to prevent conflicts within and among States.

The adoption of the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court is a milestone in the struggle against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Sweden will become a party, and I urge all States to do the same. It is imperative to close the gap of impunity.

Thirdly, we must strengthen cooperation to deepen democracy. The United Nations should increasingly become a leader in worldwide efforts to strengthen and deepen democracy. It is essential to develop civil, open and pluralistic societies; to promote equal participation of all women and men in political life; and to ensure independent media, freedom of speech and the rule of law.

I suggest that the time has come to look systematically at how the United Nations system as a whole can be even more effectively put to use to promote democracy.

Already in 1795 Immanuel Kant stressed the strong connection between peace and democracy:

> "If the consent of the citizenry is required in order to determine whether or not there will be a war, it is natural that they consider all its calamities before committing themselves to so risky a game." (*Perpetual Peace*)

Democracies seek security in cooperation with one another rather than through deterrence — in openness rather than in secrecy. Democracies also have a proven record in dealing with internal tension and strife without resorting to violence.

Strengthening democracy helps prevent violent conflict, by allowing for differing views and interests. A democratic culture provides the ground for reconciliation.

The common values inherent in democracy also provide fertile ground for peaceful cooperation to build society. The free exchange of ideas, people and goods creates interdependence and common norms. The future becomes a shared opportunity.

This is illustrated by developments during the last decade in Sweden's own neighbourhood, the Baltic region. For half a century, the Baltic was a deep trench separating East and West. The same sea today unifies free countries in blossoming trade, political cooperation and people-to-people contacts.

Fourthly, we must strengthen cooperation to bring about disarmament. In May this year, two States — India and Pakistan — exposed their nuclear ambitions by conducting a series of test explosions. These aspirations endanger international peace and security, as well as stability in the region and international non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. This was why Sweden and Japan took the initiative to prepare a Security Council resolution deploring the testing. After a decade of great promise in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the spectre of nuclear weapons is again at the centre of attention.

The possession of nuclear weapons — by any State — cannot be indefinitely accepted as legitimate. On 9 June, I and my colleagues from Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and South Africa made a joint ministerial declaration on nuclear weapons. In the declaration, we urge the five nuclear-weapon States and the three nuclear-weapon-capable States to clearly commit themselves to eliminating their nuclear weapons and nuclear capability and to start work immediately on practical steps to this end. We also set out a series of mutually reinforcing measures providing a road map to a world free from nuclear weapons.

At this session of the General Assembly, the eight nations will follow up the declaration with a draft resolution. This initiative has already been presented from this rostrum. We invite all Member States to join us in supporting this draft resolution and, *inter alia*, call for the accession by all States to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the entry into force of START II and negotiations on START III, the prompt de-alerting of nuclear weapons and the withdrawal of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

New and forceful impetus is urgently needed to regain the momentum for nuclear disarmament. It is necessary to counteract the tendency to assign new importance to nuclear weapons. These weapons must neither be given increased emphasis in defence planning nor be seen as a means to counter threats from other weapons of mass destruction.

The world needs a new international agenda for complete nuclear disarmament. We must at the same time redouble our efforts to rid the world of all biological and chemical weapons.

The threat of terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction adds to the urgency of disarmament efforts. Strict adherence to international agreements, strengthened verification and controlled weapons destruction are essential parts of a long-term strategy against terrorism.

International control regimes to limit the transfer of technology that could be used to produce weapons of mass destruction as well as other armaments must be further developed.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a serious threat to peace, security and development. Such weapons have been the primary cause of casualties in almost every recent conflict on the United Nations agenda.

Practical and concrete measures — such as collection, safe storage and destruction in the context of peacekeeping operations — should be the focus in dealing with small arms and light weapons. Therefore, the Swedish Government supports the Mali initiative for a West African moratorium on the production and transfer of such weapons.

I warmly welcome the forthcoming entry into force of the Ottawa Convention. This is a major step in the struggle against the plague of anti-personnel landmines. Concerted efforts will be needed to ensure its full implementation as well as the adherence of the largest military Powers.

Fifthly, we must strengthen cooperation to prevent armed conflict. Stable peace does not suddenly turn into military conflict. War normally breaks out after a period of gradual deterioration. Prevention has the best prospects of success at the earliest possible stage of such a process.

The need for early action is obvious. Nevertheless, decisions are taken at a late stage — often too late. There are strong forces at work which obstruct early action — forces hiding behind arguments about sovereignty, public opinion and national interest; forces defining security as stability and order, rather than dealing with the underlying causes of conflicts.

After almost two years on the Security Council we are more convinced than ever of the urgent need to build political commitment for preventive measures and to develop, hone and refine preventive instruments. It is a question of political will. It is a matter of allocating resources. It is about looking for solutions that are sustainable over the long term, even when strong forces want to focus on short-term needs alone.

National responsibility for conflict prevention is fundamental. International law makes every State responsible for its international behaviour. States should also be expected to account for their internal actions, which often have major external consequences. Sovereignty should stand for responsibility and accountability.

Conflict prevention is also an international responsibility. The United Nations possesses a wide array of instruments for preventive action. Lessons have also been learned from a wide range of peacekeeping operations.

A new generation of peacekeeping operations is emerging, often with a flexible mix of civilian, military and police components. International service is a key task for the Swedish armed forces, and increasingly also for the Swedish police.

To be effective, the United Nations — and, in particular, the Security Council — must act promptly, unitedly and in unison with regional actors. Several regional organizations have identified conflict prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes as key tasks. The growing network of European security organizations is one example, cooperation between African States another.

Cooperation with regional actors is crucial but complex in today's growing grey zone of conflicts — domestic in origin but international in impact. They often involve neighbouring countries as recipients of refugees, as weapons suppliers or even as participants. In such situations, the United Nations must be faithful to its global principles, but must also find a way of engaging regional actors in peaceful solutions that guarantee the legitimate security interests of all.

When regional leadership is available, the role of the United Nations should be one of providing support and, when international military peace operations are needed, authorizing and monitoring. When regional leadership is lacking, the United Nations must be ready to lead.

I have highlighted five key areas and objectives for the United Nations: the eradication of poverty, the promotion of human rights, the deepening of democracy, the achievement of disarmament and the prevention of armed conflicts.

Yet the uniqueness and strength of the United Nations lies not in any single field of activity, but in the totality of them all. Peace, security, democracy, human rights, social justice, humanitarian relief, sustainable development and prevention are inseparable.

In a time of difficult political and financial challenges for the Organization, it is important that we spell out our expectations and priorities. We will have to work hard to allow the United Nations to realize its potential. We owe it to the United Nations — and to each other — to give it the chance to succeed.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, His Excellency Mr. David Andrews.

Mr. Andrews (Ireland): Let me at the very outset extend to Mr. Opertti our warm congratulations upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We are particularly pleased to see presiding the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, a country with which Ireland has always enjoyed the friendliest of relations. His rich experience in politics, education, diplomacy and the law will serve the Assembly well as he directs its work for the coming year.

Also on behalf of the Irish people, I wish to pay a particular tribute to the Secretary-General for the thoughtful and determined leadership which he has brought from the African continent to the discharge of his most challenging office.

Commitment to the work of this Organization is a central part of Ireland's foreign policy and of her place in the world. Irish people strongly support that commitment. We feel close bonds with the United Nations. With many like-minded countries, we have striven to uphold and develop the universal role of the Organization for the promotion of peace, development, international cooperation and human rights. These purposes are linked in the Charter and they are linked in reality.

All around us, side by side with rapid technological and material development, we see in every region of the world uncertainty, insecurity and conflict.

Our attention has been gripped this year by the severe economic and financial difficulties which are besetting developed and emerging markets as well as economies in transition. The full effects of these difficulties have yet to play themselves out. We are all affected.

More than 1 billion people struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day. Environmental degradation and natural disasters wreak unnecessary havoc on entire nations. Meanwhile, obscenely disproportionate levels of resources are diverted to fuel the arms trade and supply the unjustifiably large arsenals in parts of the world that can least afford it. Human rights remain to be fully respected in all regions.

I think that these realities are among the root causes of the conflicts confronting us today. If the new millennium is to open with real prospects of alleviating such conflict situations, it is the root causes which we must together tackle: prevention is always better, and certainly less costly, than cure.

As my Swedish colleague has said, the Austrian Presidency has spoken and addressed the Assembly on behalf of the 15 Member States of the European Union, expressing our position on many issues. Nevertheless, I will focus my remarks on a number of issues which are of particular importance to the country which I represent.

We should all acknowledge that there can be no real peace or security without development. Development is about dignity and offering impoverished people around the world the chance of a better life now and better prospects for their children. This is not too much to ask. Its achievement, however, requires a new partnership of international engagement and commitment. All of us must share a determination to break down the walls of exclusion and marginalization that divide our world.

A new partnership must address not only aid flows but also the crippling problem of debt. It must assist developing countries to participate on a fair basis in the world economy. Development cooperation is not only about reducing unacceptable levels of poverty. All countries, developed and developing alike, must together address shared priorities that affect all our countries and all our peoples. An integrated approach is called for, as previous speakers have mentioned.

In this context, I welcome in particular the seminal report of the Secretary-General — I have already

welcomed it in a committee today — on the causes of conflict and sustainable development in Africa. We will work actively with other Member States to ensure that this report receives the strongly positive response it deserves.

I will allude for a moment to Ireland's development cooperation programme, if I may. As for Ireland's contribution, it is with some pride that I can say that we have one of the fastest growing development cooperation programmes in the world today. The Irish Government is committed to reaching the United Nations target for official development assistance — that is, 0.7 per cent of gross national product — and I think it's fair to say that we are fully determined to make further progress towards this goal in the coming years.

Last week, my Government agreed on a package of debt alleviation measures for developing countries, in the multilateral and bilateral fields, amounting to some $46 million, which is a considerable sum of money for a country the size of Ireland, and I think it was a measure of the bona fides of our intention in this whole area of development cooperation.

For Ireland, support for development cooperation means, by definition, support for the United Nations in this vital area. The United Nations has only the resources which the Member States give it. These must reflect our political commitment to confront challenges. I think that is why declining contributions to core resources for United Nations funds, programmes and agencies are a matter of deep and grave concern.

For its part, Ireland has increased significantly the level of its commitment. I am pleased to say that our Development Assistance Programme now supports 32 funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, compared to 13 just five years ago. I pledge before this Assembly the continuation of Ireland's support in that regard.

Again, the question of disarmament and nuclear disarmament was raised by my Swedish colleague, the previous speaker. The end of the cold war provided the international community with a unique opportunity to accomplish the final elimination of nuclear weapons and to usher in a nuclear-free world. Yet, while the past 10 years have witnessed important steps to reduce nuclear arsenals, there has been no clear commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon States to proceed rapidly to nuclear disarmament, as required by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Ireland's advocacy of nuclear disarmament has been consistent and unrelenting. We have been the strongest protagonists of the achievement of the goals of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Ireland proposed in 1958 and was the author of at that time. We must begin to take certain fundamental steps now to achieve the NPT's non-discriminatory and universal application. We cannot enter the third millennium with the prospect that nuclear weapons will be considered legitimate for the indefinite future.

That is why Ireland has, this year, joined with seven like-minded States — Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden — to launch the declaration "Towards a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World: The Need for A New Agenda". The steps called for in the New Agenda are premised on a clear and unambiguous commitment to be undertaken by the five nuclear-weapon States to engage in nuclear disarmament negotiations within an entirely new context. They are also premised on a similar commitment by the three nuclear-weapon-capable States — India, Pakistan and, of course, Israel — not parties to the NPT.

This session of the General Assembly provides a unique opportunity to give substance to proposals such as those contained in the Joint Ministerial Declaration of 9 June. My colleagues and I have therefore prepared a draft resolution which sets out an agenda for the definitive elimination of nuclear weapons for all time and which we ask the Assembly to consider and adopt in the First Committee.

On the question of landmines, coincidentally and fortuitously, last week I presided over a landmine conference in Dublin while the International Campaign to Ban Landmines was meeting in my own capital city to develop a civil-society-based landmine monitor. We received the welcome news that the fortieth ratification of the landmines Convention had just taken place. We now have a total ban in place and can set our minds to eradicating these obscene instruments and their consequences.

The inexcusable delay in addressing the question of landmines was a glaring failure of the international community to look squarely at an issue of human security which was fundamental to development. Another example is the persistence of expenditure on arms in certain countries, which is out of all proportion to social spending. This state of affairs must cease and the arms

trade that feeds it must be curtailed. I would personally like to see it stopped and put out of existence.

On the question of human rights, a further and very pervasive root cause of instability and conflict is inadequate respect of the very rights of which I am speaking. There are too many specific instances of human rights abuse in every region of the world. There are hopeful signs — for example, in Nigeria and East Timor — but elsewhere the situation remains bleak.

In this, the fiftieth anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must reaffirm our collective commitment to promoting respect for these rights and freedoms by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal recognition and observance. The Universal Declaration, in my view, is as relevant today as it was five decades ago when it was drafted by the representatives of developed and developing countries with important input from members of civil society. It is a universal benchmark.

We all have questions to answer. The first might be: How have we lived up to the standards set out in the Universal Declaration? What steps have we taken to build on the Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted five years ago by consensus at the Vienna Conference, which specifically reaffirmed the right to development? These are some questions that we might well ask ourselves during the current session of the Assembly.

On the question of capital punishment, another important human rights issue is the abuse of the death penalty. Ireland will continue to work for the universal abolition of capital punishment. We welcome the fact that the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, again at its recent fifty-fourth session, addressed this issue directly.

We also welcome the adoption in July of the Statute for the International Criminal Court at the international conference hosted so effectively by Italy. This is truly a landmark development. Nobody is and nobody should be above the law. We fervently hope that the Statute will enter into force on the earliest possible date and that it will secure universal adherence.

Finally, let me join with those many others who have given support and encouragement to the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The promotion of international cooperation in this key area must remain one of this great Organization's first priorities.

On the question of conflict prevention, I now turn to the maintenance of international peace and security, which, of course, is the prime responsibility and prime aim of the United Nations. The painful experiences of this decade — notably in the former Yugoslavia, Africa and the Middle East — have prompted much soul-searching and, of course, analysis.

In Kosovo, we are witnessing a humanitarian catastrophe which could replicate the horrors of Bosnia. The international community must take urgent and effective action within the framework of the United Nations to ensure that our worst fears are not realized.

Another humanitarian disaster faces us in Sudan. Recently, I saw for myself the terrible suffering of its people. I visited the epicentre of the famine in Ajip in southern Sudan, having spent three hours getting there from a town called Lokichokio in northern Kenya, which was a staging post for aid for that part of the terribly blighted country of southern Sudan. It is not acceptable that we allow this tragedy to continue. One of the essential conclusions, here again, is the need to address the origins of conflict and not just the symptoms. Foresight and adaptability are necessary.

In this context, I welcome in particular the emphasis which the Secretary-General has placed on the need to tackle the root causes of conflict in all their complex diversity. We support his strengthening of United Nations early-warning mechanisms and his prioritizing of preventive diplomacy. The many strengths and capabilities of the United Nations and the regional organizations in the area of conflict prevention must be harnessed and focused to achieve greater use of resources.

The General Assembly, for its part, is placing ever greater emphasis on conflict prevention. It has commended not least the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and acknowledged the contribution of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a regional organization which Ireland fully supports.

On the question of peacekeeping, in this, the fiftieth anniversary year of United Nations peacekeeping, I want to pay tribute to the peacekeepers who currently serve the Organization. They do so often in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. Too many have made the ultimate sacrifice. Since 1958, Ireland has been at the forefront of United Nations peacekeeping. In this period,

some 40,000 Irish peacekeepers have served with the Organization across the world. Seventy-five of my fellow Irishmen have given their lives.

Among Member States, Ireland is currently one of the leading troop contributors. My President, Mrs. Mary McAleese, in one of her earliest official engagements, visited our peacekeepers in Lebanon. Again, this underlines Ireland's active commitment to bringing peace to that part of the world. The world continues to need United Nations peacekeeping, but its operations must be based on sound mandates and have solid political and financial support.

Colleagues have mentioned the question of United Nations reform. Mobilizing the political will to tackle the interrelated causes of insecurity and conflict, I believe, is only the first step. The United Nations as an institution must be strengthened and given the necessary resources to carry through its work. Timely funding by Member States is a prerequisite.

Ireland believes that the reform process should not be viewed as a cost-cutting exercise. The wretched expression "downsizing" comes to mind. It is about making the Organization more effective in the discharge of its Charter functions, especially in the economic, social and humanitarian fields. I welcome the progress achieved to date. Ireland will continue with other like-minded States to build partnerships among the membership so that real progress can be achieved.

We have views in relation to the area of Security Council reform. A reinvigorated United Nations must include a reformed Security Council that reflects the realities and the needs of today's world. We believe that the Council must work more transparently and that its membership should be enlarged to ensure a more equitable representation. To this end, we have joined with a group of like-minded States in putting forward a number of specific proposals. We will continue to work for an agreed outcome on this issue of crucial importance to the future of this Organization of ours.

On the question of Ireland's candidature, Ireland believes that all Member States — small, like ourselves, as well as large — should have an opportunity to serve on the Security Council, the body on which the Members of the Organization have conferred primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Assembly will be aware that Ireland has presented its candidature for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the two-year term 2001-2002. Throughout its membership of the United Nations, Ireland has worked to play a bridge-building role among Member States. As a member of the Security Council, Ireland's approach would similarly reflect the interests of the totality of the broad spectrum of the membership.

I can give the Assembly some good news about Northern Ireland. My predecessors have by custom informed this Assembly of our efforts to help promote peace in Northern Ireland. It is my deep privilege, therefore, to convey an account of a breakthrough of great importance: the Agreement reached by the British and Irish Governments and eight Northern Ireland parties in Belfast on Good Friday, 10 April 1998.

The Good Friday Agreement marks a historic new beginning in relations within Northern Ireland, between the North and the South of the island and between Ireland and Britain. It has brought us all a new sense of hope. We have begun the long walk out of the dark night of division and conflict into the bright sunlight of partnership and harmony. As somebody who has spent almost 40 years in political life seeking to encourage such a journey, I am immensely gratified by this development.

The Agreement is a complex document, a careful set of checks and balances, a parity of pain and gain. Striking that balance of pain and gain on both sides was, in large part, the task of the main political parties in Northern Ireland. Their decisions called for political courage and most serious and genuine leadership, which they gave in abundance. But they could not have been taken without trust and vision, too — trust, where before there was only suspicion, and vision, where before there had only been self-interest. The leadership of these peacemakers in Northern Ireland deserves the warmest commendation of this Assembly.

With the participants drawn from the full spectrum of the political landscape, what we were addressing in the negotiations was a complex range of problems and perspectives, each with its deep roots in history. If these competing issues were to be addressed satisfactorily, we knew the final Agreement would itself have to be complex, broad-based and balanced.

Achieving agreement in these circumstances was a major challenge for all of us involved in the long, tortuous and difficult negotiations. As one of those privileged to have had such a role, I can verify that there were times during the long days and nights in Castle Buildings, Belfast, when success seemed like some

distant dream. But the determination of all sides not to be deflected was stronger than any obstacle. On the dawn of Good Friday, the dream of agreement finally became a reality.

Critically, the Agreement was emphatically endorsed by the people of Ireland, North and South, in referendums held on the same day, the first time that has happened on the island of Ireland since 1918. One of the profound consequences of this democratic endorsement is that never again may the name of the people be invoked as a basis for the shedding of blood in my country and on my island. From now on, it is manifest that the only legitimate force is the force of reason and persuasion.

The Good Friday Agreement is a blueprint for our future. Indeed, it may be a blueprint for other regions' futures. But a blueprint can be successful only if it is translated from word to deed. That vital process of implementation is the next great challenge and one that we are all now actively addressing. Some elements of the Agreement are already in place. The new Northern Ireland Assembly has been elected and the 108 members have taken their seats. Dramatically symbolizing the new era of partnership, David Trimble and my good friend Seamus Mallon, each representing the two major traditions, have been appointed First Minister and Deputy First Minister, respectively. The Assembly has made an encouraging and constructive start. Work is also proceeding on many of the other elements of the Agreement.

But institution-building alone, important as it is, will not be enough. The appalling atrocities of last summer, which saw the horrific burning to death of three young boys, the Quinn brothers, and the merciless massacre and slaughter of 29 people in Omagh underline the reality that the Agreement on its own does not guarantee peace. More than anything else, what is also required is what Seamus Mallon calls a new politics. At the heart of that new politics must be a determination to work in a new way for the wider good. All of us have constituencies to represent, but we must find new ways to balance that requirement with the needs of the wider society. That, I would suggest, is what partnership means. That, I would suggest, is what partnership is all about. It also shows how trust and reconciliation are built.

If the new politics is to work on the island of Ireland, we must seek to develop, on the basis of mutual respect, new ways of listening to each other; new ways of talking to each other; new ways of understanding each other; and, critically, new ways of working together.

We are bringing this century to a close. The existence of this great Organization of States devoted to peace reflects the turbulence of the decade. Great progress has been made, but a great price has also been paid. Each of us in our own way has had to grapple with the instinct to war and division. The experience of Ireland echoes the experiences of so many other States. We realized our desire for independence in the wake of the Great War. Our birth as a State was darkened by the horrors of civil war. We in the South of the island overcame our divisions, channelled our differences into peaceful politics and have significantly prospered. In the North, divisions and fears were not challenged. They festered and brought us almost three decades of violence.

The peace process allowed us to challenge and resolve the fears and divisions generating the conflict. The Agreement is a watershed, a harbinger of the new era that coincides with the millennium. It is a great, historic rapprochement between nationalism and unionism. All the participants in the negotiations together have achieved a great thing. But it is vital that we say to one another, as I am now again saying to the unionist community, that we recognize that a new era has dawned, in which all the old shibboleths and the old rhetoric must be replaced by a new dialogue, by a new partnership.

It is precisely in this spirit of the new politics that we must approach the inevitable difficulties that will arise from time to time, including at present those relating to the establishment of the "shadow" executive in Northern Ireland and to decommissioning. It is in the interests of all of us who support the Agreement that we resolve the difficulties to the satisfaction of all concerned. If one side "wins", everybody loses. That was the approach that secured the Good Friday Agreement. If one side "wins", everybody loses.

I should like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the role of the international community in bringing about the Good Friday Agreement, in particular that of the independent chairman, former Senator George Mitchell of the United States of America, former Prime Minister Harri Holkeri of Finland and General John de Chastelain of Canada. Their contribution was immense, and General de Chastelain's contribution continues to be. The support and solidarity, through the process of our partners in this Assembly, and, in particular, of our partners in the European Union — the President of the Commission and the Presidencies of the European Union — have been unparalleled in their contribution, as were the warm and

encouraging words of the Secretary-General of this Organization. We deeply appreciate it.

I want in particular to record our very special gratitude to the President of the United States, Mr. Bill Clinton, for his personal commitment to the cause of peace in Ireland and for the exceptional solidarity with the peace process he has displayed at all times throughout his presidency. He took the opportunity, when he addressed this Assembly last Monday, to mention Northern Ireland and Ireland on three or four or five occasions. I think that was an indication of the type of commitment he has and will continue to have in the Northern Ireland peace process.

Finally, I would like to underline the central and crucial roles played by my own Taoiseach, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, and by British Prime Minister Tony Blair in the closing days of the negotiations. Their particular role was historic and, in my respectful view, heroic.

I want to say that, in the spirit of the Charter of this Organization, we are ready to reciprocate the solidarity of the international community by way of sharing the lessons of our experience with others, should that be considered helpful. It would be a source of immense additional satisfaction to Ireland, as a committed Member of the United Nations, if the Good Friday Agreement were to be helpful to conflict resolution elsewhere.

Finally, and important though international solidarity may be, the reality is that for us in Ireland, as elsewhere, the primary responsibility rests with ourselves. May I recall here the words of a well-known author which have inspired very many:

> "Mankind must remember that peace is not God's gift to his creatures; peace is our gift to each other."

With the Good Friday Agreement, we in Ireland have enjoyed the gift of peace. We do so in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. The challenge now is to ensure that it is passed to our children and to our children's children. I know that the members of this Assembly will be with us as we address and take up that particular challenge.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker on my list is the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Latorre.

Mr. Latorre (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Dominican Republic wishes to express its gratitude for the gestures of solidarity expressed by friendly countries with regard to the passage of the terrible hurricane, Georges, which struck our country yesterday. Furthermore, we appeal to the generosity of the international community to provide cooperation with a view to facing both the immediate emergencies of the population affected by this phenomenon and the process of national recovery.

The delegation of the Dominican Republic, on behalf of the Government presided over by Mr. Leonel Fernández, wishes to extend its warmest congratulations to the President of the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, on his well-deserved election to preside over the fifty-third session, which is taking place at a time of great structural changes in global society and within our Organization. We also wish to thank Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, who presided over the deliberations of the last session of the General Assembly with such skill. Our gratitude goes also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his devotion and efforts to guide the Organization along the path towards modernization and reform, which will strengthen us as we reach the new millennium.

The changes in the realities of the world in which we live make it necessary to revise international policy. In this respect, the United Nations, being the universal forum, must be strengthened and renewed by increasing its activities in areas such as peace and security of nations, the protection of human rights and the environment and cooperation for socio-economic and cultural development.

Faithful to its principles, the United Nations must continue to encourage and deepen its programme of reforms, taking into consideration not only the complexity of the current reality, but also the future development of regulations aimed at relieving social marginalization and ethnic and religious tensions, which jeopardize the priority objectives of peace and development for our peoples. The Dominican Republic expresses its firm support for the negotiations and consultations on the programme of reform. We trust that the process will culminate in substantial changes in the various organs of the United Nations, enhancing their effectiveness and leading to a more democratic, transparent and representative Organization, thus ensuring its ability to act to achieve its present objectives.

Fortunately, the constant threat of a nuclear war has diminished. Today, however, we are faced with the challenge of combating together, and on a global scale, hunger, poverty, environmental destruction and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and encourage equitable development and free societies. We must also struggle to lay the bases of economic growth.

There are other security problems that require decisive action: international terrorism, organized crime and illicit trafficking in arms and drugs. We must create reliable instruments to put an end to these evils and achieve acceptable levels of security for our citizens so that they can live in peace. The politics of security is inspired by the vision of a democratic world that practices solidarity. Security must be achieved on the basis of political, economic, social and ecological cooperation. The principle of sovereign equality of States and the belief that conflicts of interest must be resolved peacefully require global cooperation because security can be achieved only with the participation of all States.

That task falls principally to the Security Council. The Dominican Republic believes it necessary to enlarge the Council by creating new seats for the regions of Latin America, Asia and Africa, thus strengthening it in the fulfilment of its functions and allowing for greater representativity.

The Dominican Republic believes that international peace and stability are prerequisites for a secure future for mankind. Democracy and respect for human rights, together with justice and respect for the law, are the surest ways of preserving peace. General acceptance of these principles cannot be imposed, but it can be actively promoted.

The crisis spots that afflict large segments of the world's population continue to be of concern to many States. We emphasize the need to strengthen mechanisms of dialogue and negotiation in conflict areas such as the Balkans, the Middle East and the Great Lakes region in Africa. With regard to the Republic of China on Taiwan, the Dominican Republic reiterates the positions presented by its President, Mr. Leonel Fernández, with regard to the need for the international community to consider the importance of that country, due to its geographic location, for the peace, security and prosperity of that region. We favour constructive dialogue between both sides of the Taiwan Strait to bring about understanding and mutual cooperation. We reiterate that the parallel participation of both countries in the United Nations would be conducive to the maintenance of peace.

The Dominican Republic is also committed to the process of nuclear disarmament and vigorously protests the recent nuclear tests, as these can endanger world peace. We reaffirm the need for strict respect for international treaties on the prohibition, emplacement and testing of nuclear weapons, in the atmosphere, in the oceanic subsoil and on the ocean floor. We urge nuclear-weapon States to use and handle those weapons responsibly as the only protection for those of us who do not have that type of defence. The preservation of world peace demands that Member States of the United Nations establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones and protect those already existing as a guarantee of security.

Concern for the preservation of a zone free of nuclear contamination is shared by the nations of the Caribbean, which is used as a transportation route for toxic and nuclear wastes. For those countries among us that depend largely on tourism based on sun and beaches, the coastal water quality is vital to that important sector of our economies.

Ongoing trafficking in illicit arms represents another threat to security. The arms build-up must definitively be stopped. The relevant international conventions signed by the Dominican Republic are very important, such as the one on illicit trafficking in conventional weapons.

Peaceful settlement of conflicts by means of dialogue and accord is the best method to eliminate the use of force in political relations within and among Member countries. For that reason, it is necessary to enhance the efforts and mechanisms recognized by international law in order to resolve international conflicts. In that context, the Dominican Republic accepts and defends multilateralism as the appropriate way of achieving consensus on the main problems that afflict the world population. Poverty, drug-trafficking, terrorism, inter-ethnic and territorial conflicts are problems that must not be dealt with unilaterally.

For that reason we support the strengthening of established international systems of justice. The signing of the Statute of the International Criminal Court is urgently needed to achieve these ends. We believe that the instruments to protect peace must be used before conflicts occur. The United Nations must take preventive action and respond rapidly and effectively to avoid later consequences. In that respect, the Convention on the

elimination of anti-personnel landmines, signed by many Member States of the United Nations at Ottowa, Canada, constitutes an important step and commitment towards the consolidation of mechanisms for world peace.

Firmly based on the principle of encouraging the peaceful resolution of disputes and the search for peace and security in our region, the Dominican Republic has promoted the strengthening of its neighbourly relations. For the first time in more than half a century, a Dominican President visited the Republic of Haiti. That event and the agreements reached favour the efforts undertaken by the democratic Governments of both States through dialogue and accord, which is the best way to approach their common problems.

It is in this new context of our bilateral relations that we wish to appeal to the international community to continue to provide support to Haiti. The need that brought about the commitment of the United Nations to the recovery of our neighbouring country still remains.

The Dominican Republic has met the challenges of world changes at the end of this century. The restoration of diplomatic relations with the fraternal country of Cuba constituted an inevitable step that formalized our long-lasting relations with Cuba.

Our country seeks inclusion in the integrationist trend in our geographic and geopolitical area. Thus, this year we signed two free-trade treaties, one with the five countries of Central America, and the other with the 14 members of the Caribbean Community. Both agreements are modern, advanced and comprehensive, as they deal with trade in goods and services and with investment and are in keeping with the principles of the World Trade Organization. They are conducive to economic growth, the creation of more and better jobs and improvement in the quality of life of our citizens.

Other clear signs of this regional rapprochement and participation are the two presidential events held in our country. In November 1997 the city of Santo Domingo was the site of the extraordinary summit of heads of State of the Central American countries, including Belize, as well as of the Dominican Republic, and more recently, in August of this year, of the extraordinary meeting of heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Forum. Both meetings led to agreements and concrete positions regarding hemispheric and global challenges that our region must confront.

At the same time, we have tightened our economic, political and development ties with the other nations of our region, through the presence of our President, Mr. Leonel Fernández, at the Summit of the Americas and the Ibero-American Summit through bilateral visits and exchanges at the presidential level with the United States, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia, countries with which we traditionally share close bonds. These regular presidential exchanges have led to consensus on basic topics on the international agenda and have deepened our levels of cooperation.

Allow me now to speak out the values of democracy from a basically social approach, since people are the true and ultimate *raison d'être* of democracy. Human rights and fundamental freedoms will be fully respected and guaranteed only when each citizen has a reasonable life expectancy with access to health systems and the opportunity for education in a healthy ecological environment.

As is well known, in order to achieve these objectives, large public expenditures in these areas are necessary. Two factors make this difficult: the external debt, a heavy burden which has dragged us down since the 1980s, and the current financial crisis, which affects various countries of the world, including some in Latin America. Both factors drain away resources that could have financed social development in this part of the world. The consequences are obvious. Unable to improve the living conditions of our people and help them become integrated into the global economy, poverty grows and democracy and stability are weakened.

The greatest problem facing the international community is how to deal with the enormous economic and social imbalance from which most Member States suffer, with the gap between the rich and the poor countries and with the growth in global poverty. The role of the United Nations should be strengthened in formulating and coordinating policies for cooperation and in providing technical and financial assistance to developing countries.

Human resources must take priority during the current transformation of the international, political and economic order. Women in particular must play an important role, as they constitute a dedicated, responsible and active workforce and give us reasons to see humankind as being at the centre of development and progress.

The Dominican Republic understands that strengthening the role of women in the political, social and economic life of Member States is essential if we are to reduce poverty and social inequality and promote democracy and sustainable development. That is why it is essential to give priority to policies and programmes that broaden women's participation in these areas.

We vigorously support the objectives and work of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). The plans to improve the contribution of women to the development of their countries, in accordance with their own needs, set up when INSTRAW was created, continues to be of primary importance and deserves continued support from Member States.

Creating a new international order is a political challenge. The conditions for this new order require the multilateral system to guarantee security and governability within the framework of respect for human rights. In celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has been a guiding light for building a more just world, we hope that respect for human rights will become daily practice for all people.

In conclusion, we believe that the United Nations must reflect on and accept the changes that are necessary for our Organization. That is why we enthusiastically support the reform programme, which will hope will respond to the expectations of a United Nations in tune with our time.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): Allow me to thank you, Sir, for allowing me to exercise the right of reply of my delegation following the unacceptable accusations made this morning against the Governments of Rwanda and sisterly Uganda by the Minster for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My delegation was not expecting a virulent statement and a pack of false allegations of aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo or other related fabricated stories. In this regard, I would like to refute in the most categorical terms Rwanda's military involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The facts are as follows: at the end of July 1998, at the request of the Rwandan Government, Rwandan soldiers who had been training the Congolese army returned to Rwanda in broad daylight. They were accompanied by the then army Chief of Staff of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and by President Kabila's brother-in-law, Mr. Kitui, who was replaced last month by President Kabila's own son, Mr. Joseph Kabila.

The real problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not the alleged external aggression. That has been used as a scapegoat and as an excuse meant to cover up the politics of exclusion and mismanagement and a corrupt fabric which have characterized the regimes in the Congo since independence in 1960.

The Mobutu regime was a nightmare for the Congolese people and for the international community, particularly the neighbouring countries. It had become a hotbed of corruption and destabilization which had negative effects on the neighbouring countries, including Rwanda. The fall of Mobutu was a relief for the Congolese people, as they hoped for a positive change. Many countries, including some in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Rwanda, contributed to the hope for positive change in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mr. Kabila, who was the head of the Congolese political alliance, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), became the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But there was no honeymoon, even for a short while, for the Congolese people. It did not take long for the Congolese people to be disappointed. In less than 12 months, President Kabila had destroyed the Congolese political alliance and usurped its power. He turned the leadership of the Congo into a personal fiefdom, placing his closest kin and other people from his home area in key government positions, to the exclusion of other Congolese from other provinces. Corruption and nepotism in the army became pervasive very quickly, as evidenced by the appointment of his brother-in-law as the army Chief of Staff. The politics of exclusion, corruption

and marginalization led to the present army rebellion under the political leadership of the Congolese Democratic Movement.

Whatever illusion the Congolese leadership may have, it cannot afford to ignore the existence of these internal political dynamics. Such blind silence and denial cannot wish away the presence of an internal rebellion.

We did not expect such an unhelpful statement by the Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We thought that, following the statements by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan; by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, Mr. Nelson Mandela; by the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, President Compaoré of the Republic of Burkina Faso; and by several other leaders who called for a peaceful and negotiated resolution of the internal crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congolese Minister would have heeded their calls instead of playing games in front of this body.

We did not at all expect such a statement by the Minister but we are not surprised, either. In this regard, I would like to remind the Assembly that similar statements were made in Rwanda in 1993 and 1994 in order to prepare for the genocide that wiped out more than 1 million Rwandans in only 90 days. The world is again witnessing other State-sponsored statements which, under the pretext of external aggression, are being made in order to prepare for yet another tragedy on the African continent.

Within just a few days after the rebellion had started, the Congolese authorities stepped up the inflammatory hate broadcasts on radio and television. These included statements made by very high-ranking Congolese authorities, including President Kabila himself. I will give proof of this by reading a few quotations from broadcasts made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by Radio Television Nationale Congolaise on 8 and 12 August 1998, as follows:

> "It should be stressed that people must bring a machete, a spear, an arrow, a hoe, spades, rakes, nails, truncheons, electric irons, barbed wire, stones and the like, in order, dear listeners, to kill the Rwandan Tutsis."
>
> "Whenever you see a Rwandan Tutsi, regard him as your enemy. We shall do everything possible to free ourselves from the grip of the Tutsis."
>
> "You will detect enemies and massacre them without mercy. Victory is assured."
>
> "Dear listeners, ladies and gentlemen: Open your eyes wide. Those of you who live along the road jump on the people with long noses, who are tall and thin and want to dominate us."
>
> "Be ferocious. If you happen to encounter a Rwandan enemy ... beat him to bruises."
>
> "We have come here to take revenge. The war will be a lengthy, large and vast one, because we will show the toads that never, and never ever again will they swallow the elephant. We will repulse them, and this time round we will pursue them into their territory and do to them what they did to us in our soil."

These Congolese hate messages, broadcast on 12 August 1998, were translated from French by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Monitoring Service.

Following this, on 25 August 1998 the President of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Kabila, repeated these statements on his arrival at Ndjili International Airport in Kinshasa on returning from his trip to Lubumbashi.

We have even heard statements here in justification for support of a reckless and dangerous leadership which the Congolese people have rejected. President Kabila's allies have a responsibility to the people and to the international community.

The Acting President (interpretation from French): I would like to point out to the representative of Rwanda that the 10-minute time limit has now passed, and I would urge him to conclude his statement.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): As I speak, in a place called Viara, south of Kalémié and north of Mr. Kabila's own village — tens of thousands of Congolese have been killed; and this the second attack on them. We want to raise an urgent SOS for their rescue, protection and evacuation. The Rwandan Government will assist in this process.

These are the facts. I will be circulating copies of my statement tomorrow in order to respect the time limit.

I thank you, Sir, for giving me and my delegation the opportunity to exercise our right of reply to the

vicious and unwarranted attacks on Uganda which were made by the Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I wish, on behalf of my Government, to refute in the strongest possible terms the baseless and unfounded allegations which were made here.

I would like to state the facts as briefly as I can. They are as follows.

For the last 12 months there have been repeated incursions into Uganda. As a result of an absence of government in what is eastern Congo, these repeated incursions into Uganda have resulted in merciless massacres of innocent Ugandans — men, women and children. In April this year, groups allied with the Congolese Government crossed into western Uganda, abducted 200 young boys being trained as priests in a seminary and took them across the border. They have since been indoctrinating them as young soldiers, to return to Uganda to murder their mothers, fathers and grandfathers. In May this year, the same groups crossed into Uganda, spread gasoline around a boys' dormitory at night and burned to death 80 Ugandan schoolchildren. In July this year, those groups crossed over in the town of Kasese and burned industrial plants which had been put up through donor assistance from our partners in the Nordic countries. In the same month, the same bandits crossed over and burned markets throughout the border areas.

No country, no Government, can fold its arms in the face of these atrocities. I could go on, because the catalogue was endless.

As a result of what had happened, the Ugandan Government had to respond. It sent its army to put an end to these cross-border banditry activities. I would like to assure this body that the Government of Uganda has no wish whatsoever to spend one day longer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provided the Democratic Republic of the Congo can put an end to these cross-border incursions, which have resulted in endless atrocities and acts of banditry against our own people.

Uganda shares the deep concern that has been expressed about the situation in the region and about the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We wish to reaffirm that Uganda respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Uganda does not have any territorial ambitions in that part of the world. Because Uganda believes in a peaceful settlement, Uganda has supported all the initiatives that have been put forward since the month of August, spearheaded by the illustrious President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. Meetings have taken place in Harare and in Addis Ababa. We have supported all these efforts, and Uganda will do everything possible to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo to overcome its internal conflicts.

But as long as the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot put an end to these cross-border incursions, which have resulted in untold atrocities, Uganda is entitled under international law to protect its borders and to protect its people. Tomorrow, I shall have the opportunity to circulate a written statement to this body.

Mr. Abolhassani (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning, the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates raised some unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country. Since we have clearly and repeatedly put on record our position on this issue on previous occasions, I need not go into details. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the firm view that this issue should be addressed in bilateral negotiations, and with good will, in order to find a solution. We are fully committed to our international obligations, including those arising from the 1971 agreement. We have friendly relations with our neighbours in the Persian Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates, and we stand ready, as in the past, to enter into negotiations, in good faith and on the basis of historical facts and international law, without preconditions, in order to remove any and all misunderstandings. As the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran clearly stated in his statement before the Assembly two days ago,

> "In line with the principles of the Islamic revolution, Iran is determined to follow its balanced policy of expanding relations with its neighbours and other countries on the basis of respect for independence and equality of rights." (*A/53/PV.8*)

Finally, we warmly welcome — and in fact promote — any initiative which aims to strengthen the foundation of confidence and cooperation in the Persian Gulf, which in our view is essential for consolidating peace and security in our region. In this context, the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes and counts on the United Arab Emirates as a partner. Fortunately, the Eighth Islamic Summit Conference, held at Tehran, established an appropriate mechanism for fostering confidence through dialogue among Islamic countries. We

hope that we shall see the sweet fruits of that confidence and cooperation in the near future.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): I would like to say a few words in response to the remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Spain earlier this afternoon about Gibraltar. The long-standing position of the British Government on this matter is well known to the Government of Spain. I will simply restate it briefly here.

British sovereignty over Gibraltar was clearly established in the Treaty of Utrecht. This legal fact is incontrovertible. Moreover, the British Government stands by the commitment to the people of Gibraltar, as contained in the preamble to the 1969 Constitution of Gibraltar, which states that the United Kingdom will not enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes. Spain's offer to reintegrate Gibraltar into Spain, to which Mr. Matutes referred in his speech today, can only prosper with the freely and democratically expressed support of the people of Gibraltar.

The British Government believes that issues relating to Gibraltar can only be resolved by direct talks, such as those established under the 1984 Brussels Declaration. In that regard, we attach importance to continuing the dialogue with Spain as a means to overcoming our differences.

Mr. Makonga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): Many speakers in this debate have condemned the action by one State to destabilize and destroy its sovereign neighbour State. They called upon all the parties involved in the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to show their readiness to respect the ideals of the United Nations. Those speakers wish to see a peaceful settlement of this conflict as soon as possible.

But the statements made by the representatives of Rwanda and of Uganda in exercise of their right of reply was full of accusations and gives rise in my country more to anxiety than to optimism. I wish to contradict firmly the claim that intervention by their armed forces was inspired solely by a desire of those States for security. They know that the former head of the armed forces of Congo, Commandant James Kabarebe, was of Rwandan nationality; that very individual appointed commanders stationed on the boundaries of Congo with Rwanda and with Uganda. So how could they believe that there was no guarantee of security or that there had been rebel infiltration into Rwandan territory?

The Assembly must know that Ugandan and Rwandan dissidents are to be found in the hills of Rwanda and on the territory of Uganda, not elsewhere as is claimed. It will know that the blood of Rwandese Hutus flowed during the settling of accounts between them and their Tutsi compatriots, who are now in power. The genocide also affected the Hutu population. If the international community looked at the situation in Rwanda today, it would see that the balance between Hutus and Tutsis has notably changed, to the detriment of Hutus.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo would have no wish to incriminate its two neighbours if it did not have proof, in the form of thousands of Rwandan and Ugandan prisoners, who have been shown to the diplomatic corps at Kinshasa and to the international media. These prisoners of war, who speak no known Congolese language, admit that they belong to the coalition army of Uganda and Rwanda. The Nigerian pilot whose plane was diverted by James Kabarebe on a flight between Goma and Kitona, confirmed — were there any need for confirmation — the presence of elements from the regular armed forces of those two countries. Foreign pilots, whose families remain in Kinshasa, state that there were many flights to transport troops and equipment. To this day they are hostages of Rwandan and Ugandan troops, and are unable to rejoin their loved ones.

If Rwanda does not admit its involvement in this aggression, how can it explain the capture in the western part of Congo of thousands of troops of the Rwandese Patriotic Army? On the other hand, the President of Uganda has admitted to his Parliament the occupation of a number of towns in eastern Congo by Ugandan troops; the security reasons to which he referred are nothing but subterfuge. Before 20 July 1998, the Congolese Government had given Ugandan troops a certain latitude on the border in order to prevent incursions by the Alliance Democratic Front.

Only our eastern border, with Uganda, and our western border, with Rwanda, continue to experience a lack of security; they are the points at which the Democratic Republic of the Congo is invaded and the source of the ensuing war. If efforts by Kampala and Kigali were unable to secure their frontiers at the time, how can this be possible in the face of the enmity of the

populations of the occupied areas, whom they have no hesitation in massacring.

For the Congolese delegation, peace and security can be restored only under the following conditions: the unconditional withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan troops from Congolese territory; the organization of democratic elections in Rwanda and in Uganda, which would enable the majority to exercise power and to escape oppression; respect for diversity in unity; and ethnic inclusion rather than exclusion.

I might have stopped there, but must respond to the disagreeable words of the representative of Rwanda addressed to the President of the Republic. The Democratic Republic of the Congo will circulate a document on this subject that will refute the statements that were made.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to respond to the statement made by the representative of the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran with respect to the statement that had been made earlier by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. That statement does not reflect the legal and political facts of Iran's occupation since 1971 of the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. It is not politically logical that a State the size of the United Arab Emirates should be able to occupy territory of a larger country in the Arabian Gulf region. On various occasions, the United Arab Emirates has presented its peaceful initiatives, which have the support of friendly, sisterly States in the region and throughout the world because they are in line with the Charter of the United Nations and with international law. Those initiatives specify either a bilateral solution by the two friendly and neighbourly States or placing the case before the International Court of Justice for the sake of maintaining the security and stability of the Arabian Gulf region.

We sincerely hope that the new Government of Iran will respond positively to the new developments and changes. We hope to reach a solution of this dispute and to restore the three islands to our sovereignty, with a view to fostering relationships and cooperation not only between the United Arab Emirates and Iran, but also between the other States of the region and friendly Iran.

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.